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ABSTRACT

This leader's guide presents recommendations for running seminars for parents on the subject of adolescent sexuality. These seminars are designed to involve parents in open, supportive, and thoughtful sessions dealing with questions that surround their adolescent's newly emerging sexual identities. Topics include: (1) current statistics and trends of adolescents and sexual mores; (2) sexually active adolescents; (3) ways parents can help; and (4) strategies for parent adolescent communication. (CJ)

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ED191817

Family and Community Health Through Caregiving

Seminars for Parents on Adolescent Sexuality

Leader's Guide

The materials for the *Family and Community Health Through Caregiving* progam consist of two separate entities:

Leader's Guide: This is a complete set of recommendations for running seminar sessions and includes transcripts of all audio tapes, agendas, and suggested activities. This book should be in the hands of people who lead seminar sessions.

Parent Packet: This packet of unbound materials consists of pieces of material from the leader's guide that are useful to have in the hands of the participants in the seminar sessions. They have been collected and bound in this way to help seminar leaders overcome the task of duplicating materials for parent users. The pages included in this packet are exact duplicates of selected pages from the leader's guide and are numbered to correspond to pages in that book. The parent packet pages have been three-hole punched so that participants can put them into a loose-leaf binder for easy use.

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Introduction

How can we as parents talk with our adolescents? How can we best communicate our understanding, respect, and care for them, in ways that help them to manage their behavior and general growth toward maturity? And, more specifically, how should we talk with them about their sexual development and the feelings and social pressures that accompany it?

The long-range goal of this series of seminars is to improve communication between adults and their children regarding sexuality as an important aspect of healthy living. Parents freely admit that this is difficult today. They know that young people in their teens are growing up quickly and are, quite appropriately, seeking a sense of autonomous identity from their parents. Simultaneously, they are searching for those attachments with others that provide the intimacy and caring all human beings need.

Adolescence is an especially difficult period for parents and their children, because both groups sometimes feel the other doesn't listen or doesn't really understand "what's happening." Adults and adolescents may see quite different consequences of engaging in or not engaging in particular sex-related behaviors. In addition, society gives mixed messages about social/sexual expectations, creating a confusing muddle for young people (and adults) who are struggling with the meaning of growing up today.

Parents and children alike live in a world in which controversies over the pill, abortion, "the sexual revolution," male and female role definition, changing views of marriage, and a host of other topics make headlines daily. Constant visual and auditory stimulation from the media forces us to confront continually our own sexuality or someone else's. Some experts argue that this openness can be good and healthy; but even so, most parents and educators are concerned about how adolescents can assimilate and cope with this stimulation.

Furthermore, parents wonder to what extent behavior is influenced by what young people assume society sanctions or encourages. How much do they consciously and carefully consider the consequences of their actions for themselves and others? Parents also question how young people develop standards to live by. What guides their behavior in a culture which, in many ways, prizes independence, individual self-awareness, and the questioning of traditional rules and values?

These social forces roil the waters in which we all sail. Most parents of adolescents feel they have a particular responsibility to help their children chart a steady course through the turbulence. Thus, they ask themselves difficult questions:

- How can I accept that my son or daughter is growing up and becoming an adult with his or her own feelings, relationships, and sexual identity?
- How can I help prepare my child to manage responsibly the pressures, decisions, and consequences that surround sexual behavior choices?

- How can I communicate my values, hopes, and expectations in ways that don't threaten or "turn off," but instead constructively assist my child in making his or her own choices?
- How can I let my child know that I want him or her to be comfortable in his or her sexuality?
- How can I help prevent my child from becoming a parent before he or she is ready and able to choose that role?

Overall Purpose of the Seminars

These seminars are designed to involve parents in open, supportive, and thoughtful sessions dealing with the perplexing questions that surround their adolescents' newly emerging sexual identities. A central purpose is to help parents to understand the physical, emotional, and social aspects of the growth to sexual maturity, as well as to enable them to communicate their own values about sexuality more effectively. It is hoped that more open communication between parents and their children will help the adolescents to make wiser decisions about their sexual behavior.

The seminars do not advocate a particular value position except the following: sexuality is an important part of healthy living, and sexual drive should not cause shame; unwanted pregnancies are a painful and serious problem for the partners involved and for their families. It is intended that parents will explore their own value positions in order to understand them better and to decide what actual behaviors and viewpoints they will feel comfortable promoting with their children.

Whether parents differ substantially in their approach to an issue or see eye to eye, they can find considerable food for thought and come to clearer understanding of their own values and beliefs through the dialogue that a supportive parent group provides. When adults come together to share experiences, knowledge, ideas, and skills about the complex tasks of parenting, they are strengthened in their own abilities to be parents. The community itself becomes a better place in which to live and to rear children when parents communicate with one another and work toward providing information and services that can be helpful to all young persons.

The seminars encourage parents to talk with their children in order to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. In giving first-hand case-study material, we have covered a range of decisions that adolescents and their parents have made in response to unintended pregnancies. These case studies are included to underscore the need for parents to communicate with their children before such situations arise, since the options after the fact all have some negative consequences. Education Development Center takes no position of advocacy regarding any particular decision as the recommended one. Our point of view is that both the decision about how to talk with one's son or daughter and the response to an adolescent pregnancy is an individual family matter.

If your group has never used case-study material before, it is very important to know that such accounts are true experiences. They do not represent what people think is right or wrong; rather, they reveal an actual sequence of events. Therefore, they should not be seen as advocating a particular value position or course of action. They are useful for identifying difficult and common problems, and for showing the struggle that surrounds decisions about difficult issues and the consequences of those decisions. Case studies remove issues from the realm of the abstract and give them human emotions, actions, and consequences. It is harder to say, "That will never happen to me," when people with whom you identify are acting and thinking in ways you recognize in yourself and in people you know.

Assumptions

A number of assumptions about adolescents, about sexuality, and about parents directly underlie the issues raised for discussion in these seminars.

About Adolescents

Adolescence in our society is a time of both physical and emotional upheaval. Hormonal changes affect growth, body image, attitudes, feelings, and behavior. These changes affect young people at different ages and with varying degrees of intensity. The rapidity of these changes can produce confusing and at times frightening thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. In turn, such confusion can easily lead to misunderstandings with families. Inconsistent and unpredictable behavior, and internal ambivalence and turmoil, are normal for adolescents. Young people need to try on different hats: being "cool" today and babyish tomorrow, and mothering their mothers next week. Adolescence is clearly a time of experimentation and risk taking.

Adolescents have a lot to cope with in the space of a few years: adjusting to a new and changing body; figuring out who they are in comparison and contrast with others; developing more complex relationships with same-sex and opposite-sex peers; learning to give and receive love outside the family, and to handle intimacy; managing their sexual feelings; becoming competent enough at some task to derive a genuine sense of self-confidence; separating from their parents; trying to find religious or philosophical "places to stand"; and preparing to make a living and become economically self-sufficient. Most people continue to grow in each of these areas long past the teen years but the accompanying anxieties and pressures are probably most acute between the ages of 13 and 19.

Adolescents commonly have misinformation, unfounded fears, and guilt feelings surrounding the issue of sexuality. They are often more unsure of themselves than they care to show. They find it difficult to ask adults the questions that are on their minds. They may feel embarrassed or afraid of being laughed at or reprimanded, or they may simply feel less grown up, asking

parents for help or information. They may wonder how their parents could possibly understand their feelings, and they certainly don't want to upset Mom or Dad with an inappropriate question. Thus, they get most of their information about sex from friends, books, and the other media.

About Sexuality

Our society transmits conflicting messages about desirable sex roles, body image, personal relationships, sexual intimacy, and the meaning of "being grown up."

Eleven million teenagers (ages 13 through 19) are sexually active. Teenage pregnancy, birth defects tied to the youth of the mother, divorce in shotgun marriages, and venereal disease are issues parents and other concerned adults might address sensitively and intelligently, because the statistics of incidence are very high and getting higher.

Human sexuality can be one of the deepest expressions of loving and caring communication between adults. In our attempts to help young people put their sexuality in perspective, we want to avoid making them feel that adults think sex is basically negative.

About Parents

Parents generally find it somewhat awkward and difficult to discuss issues of sexuality with their children for a variety of understandable reasons. Most parents have certain values that they wish to convey to their children, yet sometimes they find it difficult to do so in a manner that their children perceive as open, helpful and non-threatening.

Young people need to hear clear messages from their parents concerning sexuality. They will be most responsive to parents who listen to them and talk to them in an understanding and nondogmatic way. Parents can learn to acknowledge that their children will be making intimate choices, while helping them to consider the consequences of their actions. Adolescents need to understand that sexual activity involves responsibilities to themselves, to those who care about them, and to those who might be born.

This seminar series gives parents an opportunity to talk about sexuality and their children in an open and supportive structure. The series not only provides them with sound information about human growth and development, it also encourages them to take constructive action--to communicate personally with their own children, and to see that schools, churches, health agencies, and youth-service agencies within their community provide young people with appropriate information and guidance services when the need arises.

Within such seminar groups, parents can examine and discuss a variety of opinions and ideas on how to help their children manage their sexual development responsibly. Sharing their perceptions and experiences will help parents to take a deeper look at the pressures and dilemmas adolescents face in coming to terms with their sexuality.

Overall Goals of the Seminars

In the course of these seminars, parents will have opportunities to:

- hear case histories of sexually active young people and adolescent parents in order to gain a clearer understanding of the needs, pressures, and motivations that influence adolescent sexual behavior.
- become aware of some recent facts and statistics about adolescent sexual activity and the incidence of adolescent pregnancy in the United States today.
- explore the development of sexual identity in adolescence as an important part of growth toward healthy adulthood.
- investigate attitudes toward adolescent sexuality from a variety of perspectives in order to clarify value positions.
- consider ways of communicating with their own sons and daughters about issues of human development, sexuality, and decision making during the adolescent years.
- identify appropriate roles for parents, schools, churches, and other community agencies in making available necessary information and guidance to parents and young people in their own community.
- develop an informal, ongoing support group that could extend its concern beyond issues of adolescent sexuality to other important aspects of parenting.

Seminar One:

What's Going On?

Objectives for Parents

Parents will be able to:

- be part of a relaxed congenial group in which people feel free to share ideas, ask questions, and discuss concerns, values, and hopes with one another.
- indicate (anonymously) their present views about appropriate sexual standards for their adolescent children and hear the views of other parents.
- consider the implications of two case studies of adolescents whose sexual activity led to accidental pregnancies.
- learn about the incidence of adolescent sexual activity, and compare their own attitudes with those of a random sample of adolescents.

Agenda

Suggested Time (2 ½ hours)	**Activities**
10 minutes	Introduce the Participants
10 minutes	Introduce the Seminar Series
5 minutes	Introduce Seminar One
10 minutes	1. Where It's At: Pass the Hat
50 minutes	2. What Parents Fear Most: Adolescent Pregnancy Cheryl Robert
35 minutes (including break)	3. The Adolescent Sexuality Survey
15 minutes	4. Did You Know? and What's Beneath the Statistics?
20 minutes	Overview of the Next Two Seminars

Introduce the Participants

10 minutes*

You might start the seminar by asking participants to group their chairs in a circle, or you may wish to arrange the chairs ahead of time. This circular arrangement encourages discussion and reduces the tendency for everyone to look to the seminar leader(s) for "the answers."

Begin the session by asking participants to introduce themselves (you might begin with yourself). Encourage good humor and a relaxed atmosphere. If it seems appropriate, it is perfectly all right to acknowledge that it's not easy for a group of parents to come together to talk about adolescent sexuality for a variety of understandable reasons: they're afraid they're ignorant on the subject; they wonder if they're too liberal or too old-fashioned; they fear that others will think they're having a problem with their own son or daughter; they really don't know what they think about the issue any more; they remember their own adolescent years with mixed feelings; they wonder about their real ability to influence their adolescents, even if they knew what to say to them; and so on. These concerns are natural and normal, and you can respect and acknowledge them by your manner and personal ease.

Let parents know that they are not being asked to defend or argue about their own personal views on sexual morality, per se. Rather, coming together is an opportunity to share experience and information in order to be better prepared to talk with their children about the sexual aspects of growing up.

By the end of the first ten minutes or so, parents' anxiety should begin to subside, and they should begin to look forward to the rest of the session.

Introduce the Seminar Series

10 minutes

Refer to the introduction of this handbook and use it as your guide for framing the seminar series. You may wish to put the guide questions (pages 1-2) on the chalkboard or on newsprint before the session begins so that you can easily refer to them. If parents wish to add other questions, jot them down where everyone can see them. Describe the overall purpose of the seminars (page 2).

Next, refer to the overall goals for the seminars (page5). Explain that parents are asked to attend a minimum of four seminar sessions to accomplish these

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*Please note: The suggested times given after each activity are provided to give you a sense of the overall scheduling of the seminar. Feel free to vary these time lengths, keeping in mind your group's interests, needs, and concerns.

goals. It is recommended that the four seminars take place at two-week intervals. At the fourth session, the parents can decide if they wish to continue the seminars, to explore issues more deeply, to work on communication skills, or to analyze community needs and resources, for example. They may also want to meet again to make appropriate recommendations to other parents, educators, or health professionals about useful strategies or programs that hold particular promise for helping young people in their community to manage their sexual "growing up" wisely.

Parents should understand from the outset that this series is a serious and thoughtful attempt to assist them in communicating effectively with their own children about sex-related issues and choices. Whatever other outcomes occur—such as additional seminar sessions for themselves or moves to share information with others—is up to them.

Introduce Seminar One

5 minutes

Once questions about the series as a whole are answered, turn participants' attention to this seminar by referring to the objectives and describing briefly the agenda for the rest of the meeting (page 8).

1. Where It's At: Pass the Hat

10 minutes

Pass out one 3x5 card to each participant. Explain that the cards will be placed in the hat and the writer will remain anonymous. First ask parents to write on the unlined side of the card what their parents told them about managing their sexuality during their adolescent years. After a minute or two, ask them to turn the card over and print clearly three sentences that sum up what message they would most like to tell their adolescent son or daughter about sex. For this exercise, ask them to disregard what others think—or what they think others would write—and concentrate on finishing the phrase, *"If I were completely free to say what I really believe about sex and how I think my son or daughter should manage his or her sexual behavior over the next few years, I would say the following three things"*:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Allow people about five minutes to write their sentences. Ask them to fold the cards in half and pass the hat. Mix up the cards and then read first from the plain side (what my parents told me) and then from the lined side (what I want to tell my children). No reaction or commentary is necessary between cards. Similarities and differences in the various points of view will be readily apparent. The purpose of this exercise is threefold: first, each person can reflect on differences and similarities between their parents' messages to them and those they hope to convey to their children; second, each person can silently compare or contrast his or her responses with those of others in the room; and third, the responses as a whole tend to give a reading of the prevailing social norms of the community represented by these parents.

If the comments are similar, parents will probably feel a sense of mutual support and reinforcement and may feel free to participate openly in seminar discussions right away; if the comments show a significant range of differences, parents may look forward to the chance to explore differences and sharpen their own understanding of the issues during the subsequent seminar activities. Either way, everyone will have a clearer picture of where they and the group stand at the outset.

Do not stop for discussion now. Move right into the second activity. There will be opportunity for discussion later.

Keep the folded cards. You will use them again in the third seminar, as an informal measure of whether group norms remain substantially the same or change significantly over the duration of the seminars.

2.
What Parents Fear Most: Adolescent Pregnancy

50 minutes

1. Take three minutes to summarize the messages just shared by the group. You might begin by noting that there were probably lots of positive things expressed, but there were probably some negative messages too, like "Don't get pregnant," or "Don't father a child." Such statements probably express what parents fear most about adolescent sexual activity. Parents recognize that their children are sexual beings. They certainly don't want their children to be hurt by an emotional relationship that they're not ready to handle, to get a "bad reputation," to experience sex as cheap or meaningless, or to get a venereal disease. But probably the worst thing of all would be for their daughter to get pregnant or their son to father a child out of wedlock. Yet this happens all the time, to children from all kinds of families—from strict homes and easygoing homes, from big families and small, to children who have a strong religious life and those who do not. Rather than avoid looking at what parents fear most, invite the group to "jump in," and listen to two adolescents describe their experiences with accidental pregnancy.

2. Play the Cheryl tape (5 minutes). With all tapes in this seminar series, we recommend that participants have the transcripts in hand so they can read along as they listen if they wish. The "Cheryl" transcript begins on page 14 .

3. Ask parents for their general reaction to the tape (10 minutes). Two points of particular interest are: the way Cheryl describes the multiple expectations that influence her behavior; and her sense of being both child and mother at once.

a. Coping with Multiple Expectations

Cheryl clearly expresses a dilemma many young women face. She illustrates the confusion young people feel about standards of sexual behavior. Her confusion is spelled out when she is unable to pinpoint her own motivation for engaging in sexual intercourse: "I was kind of talked into it." "...my hormones and glands got me into a lot of trouble." She feels she must live up to the image of the sexually seductive woman: "I felt like I had to be like everybody in the magazines or in *Playboy* magazine, and it was supposed to be this hutcha-hutcha thing." At the same time, her mother and other parts of society are telling her to refrain from sexual intercourse until marriage. She seems to place responsibility for her behavior outside herself.

- What do you think Cheryl herself really wanted from the sexual relationship?
- How can young women be encouraged to sort out the mixed messages about sexuality and end up feeling as responsible as their partner for their sexual behavior choices?

b. Task of Growing Up vs. Task of Motherhood/Parenthood

Cheryl says, "I could either be a good mother or I could be an 18-year-old person in the process of growing up. I could be one or the other, I couldn't be both."

- Why does Cheryl feel these are two completely separate incompatible roles? Do you agree or disagree?
- Do you think Cheryl really thinks she was a good mother? How important are the opinions of other people in determining how we feel about ourselves?

4. Play the Robert tape (10 minutes). Allow time for parents to discuss their reactions to Robert's experience. If the following points are not raised by the participants themselves, you may want to raise them.

- What are Robert's feelings toward his girlfriend?
- Why do you think it is so difficult for Robert to express his emotions?
- What was Robert looking for in the relationship? How does what he wanted compare to what Cheryl wanted? Are these needs "bad"? Why or why not?
- Is this couple ready for parenthood? What would you recommend if you were Robert's parents? What are the alternatives?
- This couple's misinformation about a woman's fertile time is particularly disconcerting. How do young people in your community get their information? Do you think your children know when ovulation is most likely to occur, and how many days are likely to be unsafe? Do they realize that ovulation sometimes occurs at other times of the month, particularly if the female's periods are irregular? Where did they learn the information they have?

Summary

To summarize this discussion, and introduce the next activity, you might say something like the following: "What do we as parents fear most? We don't want to have our children facing the problems that Cheryl and Robert faced. There seem to be no good alternatives for youngsters caught in an unwanted, accidental pregnancy. So we generally say to ourselves, that won't happen to my child. But just how frequently does it happen? Are Cheryl and Robert members of a small minority of young people? How are they different from and similar to our own children or their friends? Just how widespread is adolescent sexual experience? What do I as a parent really know about adolescent sexuality today?"

Cheryl

Cheryl was 17 when she became pregnant. She chose to marry the child's father, and she now has two children.

I was already out of high school. Thank God I was out of high school. It was only a fluke that I was out of high school. I had graduated in June and I'd become pregnant in August. And I turned 18 in October. And my so-called boyfriend had gone back to school in New York. My mother was hoping I would meet some nice guys and forget about him; she didn't like him. At that point I think the only reason that I was sticking with him is 'cause he's the only guy I ever had a sexual relationship with. Like a lot of other girls, you know, you think, "Oh, my God, I slept with him and he's not going to get away from me now." The first guy you sleep with if you have this thing with, you kinda—even when you know you want to get out of it—you can't. That doesn't let you get out of it. You feel like you've already given all you had to give and so he better stick around. And it can really crush you if he doesn't. But it's not an uncommon reaction to feel like it's okay, 'cause I'm going to marry him. In my case, I not only had to justify having sex, I had to have a baby.

I was just too young to be able to be in a sexual relationship. I was kind of talked into it, and you know, your hormones and your glands are ready to push you right into bed, but your mother is trying to keep you out of there. And you say, your mother doesn't know anything. Well, my hormones and glands got me into a lot of trouble. They just, you know, he did this thing to me, and I was in love.

It felt like nothing. I didn't even know what it was supposed to feel like. I was faking the whole thing. I felt like it had to be like everyone in the magazines or in *Playboy* magazine, and it was supposed to be this hutcha-hutcha thing. And it's nothing. I'd look at the centerfold and I'd say, "Oh, I have to look like that." You know, act sexy, and it was stupid. And I didn't know what I was doing. I was living up to someone else's expectations.

And I became pregnant. When you're 16, thoughts of getting an IUD or a diaphragm are kind of, you know, you have to feel, and IUD, who knew about them, but you knew about a diaphragm 'cause they you always knew about. And you weren't comfortable enough yet with your body to be able to use one.

The whole thought of it was just blech. I asked him to use something, and he said, "Have you ever taken a shower in a raincoat?" And I said, "Oh, God." Okay, so I got pregnant.

So I called him up long distance to tell him, and we went and eloped and got married, which was the biggest mistake of my life. And I went through the pregnancy and I had a very healthy baby, and I have my little boy who was incredible. And I nursed him for 14 months and I loved him to pieces. And I'm glad I had him because it would have made living with the guy I married unbearable if I'd been alone with him. And I turned away from my husband after he was born. I wasn't ready to be married. I could either be a good mother, or I could be an 18-year-old person in the process of growing up. I could be one or the other. I couldn't be both. So I was a good mother. At least I think I was a good mother. I don't care what anyone else thinks anyway.

I became pregnant with my second child because, well, I think I wanted to have another baby just so I'd have a baby to take care of and to just to shut him even further out of my life, just to surround myself with having another baby. And I had my second son, and when he was three months old, I told my husband I wanted a divorce. I was 20 years old. I had a two-year-old and a three-month-old.

And so what happened was for a few years there I had to do growing up and I couldn't really be an effective parent. But thank God my family was very supportive, and they helped me with my children and I grew up, finally. I finally—it was slow—it took me a longer time than it would have taken had I not had children.

Robert

Robert's 16-year-old girlfriend is pregnant. They have not decided what to do about it.

I'm 18, she's 16. I've been going out with her for five months. I graduated this year from high school. She was a sophomore; right now she's going to summer school, so next year she'll be a senior, 'cause she wants to graduate early so she can spend more time with me. I met her at work. I first met her, I was talking to her, and we would always joke around. There's just something to her that attracted me. I don't know what it is, I still can't tell you. We were fooling around and she goes, "Let's make love." All right. I would have brought it up sooner or later, but just at that point she was the one who brought it up the first time.

You start going out with a chick and before you know it you're in bed somewhere. It's not two days after, but give it some time and the closer you get the more chance it's going to have of happening. On my end, I don't like using contraceptives; I like to get my feet wet. I don't like them, I don't believe in them. She said, "No problem." It's not quite two weeks after her period. That sounded good to me.* It's all right for me knowing we have a couple of cool weeks, and the other week I'll just sweat it out or something. I'm no authority on the female anatomy, but I know enough to get me by, I suppose. I figure the chances are 99 to 1 that she won't get pregnant. In my mind, before this ever happened, there wasn't much of a chance. It was in my mind, as in everyone else's, that it won't happen to me. Everything is cool.

We'd argue all the time and we'd argue every time we were together. That's not the way a relationship is supposed to be, as far as I'm concerned. It was just getting to be too much. I wanted to break up with her, and then I found out she was pregnant. The first thing that hit was she missed her period. She starts going, "I'm pregnant." I'm just going, "I hope she's sick; I hope she's got an infection, or something." I just had my mind dead set that she wasn't pregnant. She kept bringing up the subject, and I would say, "You are not. This is ridiculous." It wasn't even two weeks. She went out and got the test. She heard the results when she was at my house, and she was as flipped out as I was. She cried and she cried and she cried. I felt really, really bad. I know what a strain it is for her. She goes, "Oh, no, what am I going to do? I've got to tell my parents and I can't tell my parents." She goes, "I was a virigin and I wasted it all on you, and now I'm a tramp." I'm this and that and the other thing. She said she wouldn't have done it if she had known that we weren't getting married. Which is ridiculous. She feels used and abused. She's going to feel even more used and abused.

I don't want to get that feeling. By her viewpoint, her giving up her virginity meant that we were getting married kind of thing. I guess she wanted to save it for her husband. But I'm her first love and she's all tangled up in it. She said she'd like to have it for me, without even me saying I wanted to have it. I can see my girlfriend pushing me into a few things, but all of a sudden we're engaged, and we're gonna get married, and when. She knows I can't afford it, and even if I could afford it, I'm too young to have that bond. I'd be tied down to something I wouldn't want to be tied to, you know what I mean? She's trying to act like she's about 25. I'm just going, "But you're only 16, and there is so much in life, so many people you haven't met. We're always mad at each other. I think really you expect too much out of me. You're looking at me like a husband and I was really only a boyfriend. There are things that I can't do that you expect out of me."

All of a sudden finding out you are a father, whatever, is just like an awful lot to the head. What am I going to do? What's going on? You get scared. It just hit me and I was just stunned.

*Note this typical example of how misinformation about sexual functions is relied upon as a basis for decision making. Two weeks after a woman's period is usually her most *fertile* time.

I was afraid at first. I thought, wait until her parents find out. Wait until anybody finds out. There is no return back now. I didn't cry, I didn't laugh. I didn't anything. I just stared at the wall. For the last seven years I haven't showed the least bit of emotion. I am really not the kind of person that shows a lot of emotion. I know it's there, but it just doesn't show a lot of times. I just escape it in my own mind.

I thought about it, being a potential father, and it kind of tickled me pink to have a kid running around. But I can't even afford a pack of butts. I couldn't even make a phone call at a pay phone right now. It would probably be funky, but this isn't the right time in life. I can see it maybe when I'm about 30, but 18; I just hit puberty.

I just didn't want her parents to find out. As it turns out, she needed somebody to turn to. I wasn't there all the time. At any rate, her mother, she just asked her. She goes, "Are you pregnant?" and she goes, "Yeah." Her mother just broke down and started crying. She didn't know if she would tell her father or not. When her father finds out, I'm going to leave.

Her mother said she'd give us all the help we needed. Parents are trying to get you guided in life the right way as their eyes see it. But they're trying to protect something, I don't know what. They probably know what is going to happen, but they don't want to know about it. I learned from experience. My parents never told me nothing.

As far as I'm concerned, there is nothing parents can do to control it. Nothing. They can advise. They say you shouldn't do it till you are married, but what about the way they took life. Didn't they ever want to do anything? If I was a parent, I'd say, "Use contraceptives. Be smart." You might like the chick, but chances are if you are young and you have a kid, you'll end up getting married and you'll end up getting caught up in a situation you don't want to get caught in. I wish it had never happened, because it would have made life so much easier.

I could have gone my own way with less strings attached, put it that way. Right now I'm not shopping for marriage, I'm shopping for, I'm just looking for a girl I can get along good with and have a good time with, and do this and that. I'm trying to find somebody I can get along with, to share some good things in life. We got the same interests. See how things work out.

I feel wicked bad for her. I really do. She needs a really close friend, somebody to hang on to. Right now I'm just gritting my teeth and lying through this whole situation. I told her I agreed trying to go back out again. I said I would do it. So she thinks we are madly in love with each other again and that we are going full force again. She just looks at me and says, "Well, I love you." She calls it love, and I call it complete infatuation. I look at her sad-eyed, because the feeling that was there just isn't there. It might be. I never know. I could end up going out with her in a couple of years and really getting married to her in a few, but right now just is not the time. I just got to lie and I hate to do it. I still have feelings for her.

3.
The Adolescent Sexuality Survey

35 minutes, including a 10-minute break

To probe more deeply into what they know and feel about issues of adolescent sexuality, participants are now asked to fill out the Adolescent Sexuality Survey. They will need about 15 minutes to complete the survey. After completion of the survey, participants can compare their attitudes to those of the adolescents sampled. The survey begins on the next page. Answers to Part One and the sample teenage response for Part Two, appear on page 23.

After participants complete the survey, they may take a break during which one or two of them could assist in tallying the group's responses. This can be done on the chalkboard or on newsprint, but should be written large enough so everyone can see it.

When the group reassembles, refer them to the sample responses sheet (page 23). The answers to Part One are based on data from national surveys done in 1974. There may be some discussion of the statistics—most parents are surprised by the answers and wonder if they hold true in their own community. You might point out that over the past few years the largest percentage increase in the incidence of sexual activity and adolescent pregnancy has been among white suburban high school students. It also should be pointed out that these figures are probably low in comparison to this year's statistics, since most of these are based on 1974 data.

By now your tallying team should be ready to post the group results. Together you can compare the parent group responses with those of the youth sample. Note particular discrepancies and points of agreement. Encourage participants to discuss what the statistics mean to them.

After discussing the questionnaire, people usually want to know more about factors that underlie both the statistics themselves and the opinions young people expressed about adolescent sexuality. Relevant statistics follow in the next section.

The Adolescent Sexuality Survey

The following questions concern issues of adolescent sexuality. In Part One, you will be able to compare your answers with reports based on national surveys. Part Two asks you to give your *opinion* concerning certain issues. Opinions gathered from a sample of teenagers will be available so that you may compare them with your opinions. When you are through with the survey, please turn in your answer sheet.

Part One

These questions deal with national trends in adolescent pregnancy and related issues. Circle the letter on the answer sheet that identifies the choice you believe comes closest to national reports.

1. Of all births in the U.S., teenage mothers account for at least:
   a. One out of 20
   b. Two out of 20
   c. One out of 15
   d. One out of 5

2. In 1974, teenagers in the U.S. gave birth to approximately:
   a. 210,000 babies
   b. 355,000 babies
   c. 523,000 babies
   d. 608,000 babies

3. In 1974, approximately what percentage of 17-year-old males reported that they had had sexual intercourse with at least one partner?
   a. 55%
   b. 80%
   c. 35%
   d. 10%

4. In 1974, approximately what percentage of 17-year-old females reported that they had had sexual intercourse with at least one partner?
   a. 30%
   b. 55%
   c. 80%
   d. 15%

5. The average age at which girls can conceive a baby has dropped from:
   a. 13½ to 12½
   b. 16 to 15
   c. 15½ to 14½
   d. 14 to 13

6. In 1974, teenagers had about 275,000 reported abortions. Of all reported abortions in the U.S., teenagers account for:
   a. one out of two
   b. one out of three
   c. one out of ten
   d. one out of five

7. Death rates for babies born to mothers under 15, compared to mothers between 20 and 34, are:
   a. about the same
   b. more than twice as great
   c. much lower
   d. much higher

8. Compared to teenage girls without children, the likelihood of teenage mothers attempting suicide is:
   a. less likely
   b. twice as likely
   c. five times as likely
   d. seven times as likely

9. Among young women, dropping out of school is most likely caused by:
   a. poor grades
   b. poverty in the home
   c. pregnancy
   d. abortion

10. According to national statistics, the likelihood that a pregnant 15-year-old girl will have a healthy baby is, in comparison to all expectant mothers:
    a. far greater
    b. slightly greater
    c. about the same
    d. less great

11. Medical complications during pregnancy occur more frequently among women in:
    a. the 13-16 age group
    b. the 16-19 age group
    c. the 20-25 age group
    d. the 26-30 age group

12. The estimated amount of money that society spends during the mother's lifetime for the care and well-being of an unmarried mother and her baby is:
    a. $20,000
    b. $50,000
    c. $75,000
    d. $100,000

Part Two

For each statement, draw a circle on the answer sheet around one of the following: SA (strongly agree), A (agree), NS (not sure), D (disagree), or SD (strongly disagree). People differ in their opinions regarding issues, so please answer according to your own opinion. There are no right or wrong answers to this section of the questionnaire.

1. Girls want to get married more than boys.
2. The father should be the main person to support the family financially.
3. Nice girls don't have sex before marriage.
4. Nice boys don't have sex before marriage.
5. Most girls want to marry a boy who is a virgin.
6. Most boys want to marry a girl who is a virgin.
7. If a boy has sex with a girl before marriage, he will lose his respect for her.
8. If a girl has sex with a boy before marriage, she will lose her respect for him.
9. Girls are more interested than boys in having babies.
10. Raising a child is mostly the mother's job.

A high school boy should be responsible for contraception in his sexual relationships:

11. Always.
12. After talking to his partner about it.
13. Only if the girl doesn't provide contraceptive protection herself.
14. Never, since protection against pregnancy is a girl's private problem and not a boy's responsibility.
15. Never, because contraception is wrong.
16. Never, because sexual relations belong only in marriage.

A high school girl should be responsible for contraception in her sexual relationships:

17. Always.
18. After talking to her partner about it.
19. Only if the boy doesn't provide contraceptive protection himself.
20. Never, since protection against pregnancy is a boy's private problem and not a girl's responsibility.
21. Never, because contraception is wrong.
22. Never, because sexual relations belong only in marriage.

An unmarried teenage girl who is pregnant should:

23. Have an abortion.
24. Have the baby and give it up for adoption.
25. Have the baby and raise it alone.
26. Marry the baby's father and raise the baby with him.
27. Have the baby and allow someone in her family to raise the child.

A teenage boy who impregnates a girl should:

28. Do nothing, since it's the girl's responsibility.
29. Talk to her about the options she has, but leave the choice to her.
30. Make a joint decision with the girl about what to do.
31. Take on financial responsibility for the child's support without marrying the girl.
32. Marry the girl and accept equal responsibility for bringing up the child.

If a high school boy and/or girl are known to use birth control, this probably means that they are:

33. Too willing to have sex.
34. Acting older for their age than they should be.
35. Taking responsible precautions against a possibie pregnancy.
36. Boasting about their sexual know-how.

Survey: Answer Sheet

Part One:

1.	a	b	c	d	7.	a	b	c	d
2.	a	b	c	d	8.	a	b	c	d
3.	a	b	c	d	9.	a	b	c	d
4.	a	b	c	d	10.	a	b	c	d
5.	a	b	c	d	11.	a	b	c	d
6.	a	b	c	d	12.	a	b	c	d

Part Two:

1.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	19.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
2.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	20.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
3.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	21.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
4.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	22.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
5.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	23.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
6.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	24.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
7.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	25.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
8.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	26.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
9.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	27.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
10.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	28.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
11.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	29.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
12.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	30.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
13.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	31.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
14.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	32.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
15.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	33.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
16.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	34.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
17.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	35.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
18.	SA	A	NS	D	SD	36.	SA	A	NS	D	SD

Survey:
National Data and Sample Student Responses

Part One: Answers based on national data, 1974

1. d
2. d
3. a
4. a
5. c
6. b
7. d
8. d
9. c
10. d
11. a
12. d

Part Two: Sample Adolescent Responses

Listed below are the responses of approximately 250 adolescents of varied backgrounds to the questions your group answered. The data were obtained in the spring of 1974. Circles indicate the most frequent response.

	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1	34	(99)	54	48	13
2	49	73	14	(75)	33
3	10	14	35	78	(86)
4	7	34	55	(99)	55
5	4	25	34	(105)	69
6	22	76	41	(87)	25
7	22	73	7	(79)	65
8	33	71	(96)	36	13
9	34	35	57	45	(75)
10	8	25	56	58	(91)
11	44	(72)	70	31	27
12	13	71	44	(88)	25
13	6	56	43	(101)	37
14	94	(120)	16	6	3
15	9	29	45	(115)	47
16	2	13	64	(84)	69
17	59	(88)	43	44	9
18	43	(112)	37	31	11

	SA	A	NS	D	SD
19	19	(72)	40	69	40
20	3	13	14	(81)	123
21	3	11	32	74	(114)
22	15	19	43	52	(107)
23	24	40	48	49	(67)
24	12	36	54	(80)	36
25	43	(68)	65	43	17
26	3	36	40	(81)	66
27	2	6	4	71	(14)
28	35	(87)	26	53	22
29	12	57	60	(69)	28
30	23	(32)	28	10	17
31	52	(74)	63	22	17
32	33	71	(96)	36	13
33	34	35	57	45	(75)
34	8	25	56	58	(91)
35	44	(72)	70	31	27
36	13	71	44	(88)	25

4.
Did You Know? and What's Beneath the Statistics?

15 minutes

Refer participants to the "Did You Know?" sheets on pages 25-27, *and "What's Beneath the Statistics?" on pages* 27-28. Give participants about five minutes to read over the statements. Then lead a short discussion (about ten minutes) around the question, "Which of these facts was most surprising to you?" Since these facts represent only a brief collection of what is known about adolescent growth and development, parents may express interest in learning more about this area. Let them know that materials will be used in the next seminar that include excerpts on adolescence from some experts.

Did You Know?

Physiological Changes

1. The average at which the physical growth spurt for females begins is 12, but it can begin as early as eight and as late as 17. (McCandless, 1970)
2. On the average, the physical growth spurt for males begins around 14, but it can begin as early as 11 and as late as 18. (McCandless, 1970)
3. General physiological changes during adolescence include: ossification of bones; changes in skin texture and ratio of fat to muscle; changes in the amount and texture of body hair; increase in penis and testes size in males, and in vulva and clitoris size in females; increase in height and weight; change in body proportions in relation to head size; development of musculature and, in females, breasts. (Males may also have some degree of temporary breast development.) (McCandless, 1970)
4. The average age of menarche (the first menstruation in girls) has dramatically dropped over the years:

1870	16.5 years
1930	14.5 years
1950	13.5 years
1973	12.6 years

5. First ejaculation in men occurs at an average of just under 14 years, but it can occur as early as 11 or as late as 16. Males can produce fertile sperm in sufficient numbers for fertilization as early as one year after first ejaculation.
6. Girls generally achieve their adult stature betwen the ages of 15 and 18, and boys between 17 and 20 years. Adolescents today are taller and sexually more mature at a younger age than adolescents in the past. The growth spurt begins earlier, the rate of growth is faster, and the maximum growth is reached about two years sooner than it was two or three generations ago. (White and Speisman, 1977)
7. Adolescents have healthy, emerging needs and desires for: intimacy, belonging, dominance, submissiveness, curiosity, intensity, identification, imitation, pleasure, and rebelliousness. (Mitchell, 1972)

Incidence of Sexual Activity and Pregnancy

8. Fifty-five percent of all adolescents (13-19) are sexually active. (Sorenson, 1973; Zelnick and Kantner, 1977)
9. Thirteen percent of all adolescents with sexual experience had their first experience by age 12 (17 percent of the boys, and 7 percent of the girls). (*Ibid*)
10. In 1972, nearly 500,000 adolescents under 21 contracted venereal disease. (Gordon, 1974)

11. The birthrate is decreasing in all age groups except among adolescents. Adolescents account for one out of every five births in the United States today: nearly 617,000 in 1973. 247,000 births are to adolescents 18 years old and younger; 13,000 births occur to girls under 15 (Guttmacher, 1976 a)
12. Seventy to eighty percent of adolescent births are unplanned. (*Ibid*)
13. Births to mothers who are 15 and younger climbed 75 percent between 1970 and 1974, from 26,000 per year to 46,000. The number of births to mothers 16 and 17 years old rose 23 percent. (March of Dimes)
14. Between 1971 and 1974, there was a 12 percent increase in out-of-wedlock births to unmarried white girls 15-19 years old. There has been a decrease in out-of-wedlock births to black girls. (Zelnick and Kantner, 1977)
15. The increase in babies born to unmarried people is a long-term trend. In 1940, only one child in 30 was born to unmarried parents. By 1960, one in 20; by 1970, one baby in ten; and in 1974, one in eight. (U.S. Census, 1973; Nye, 1976)
16. In 1977, adolescents accounted for one-half of all unwed pregnant women in the United States. In 1967, one out of three girls who had out-of-wedlock babies decided to keep them. In 1972, four out of five kept their babies. (Zelnick and Kantner, 1977)
17. It is estimated that about 30 percent of those adolescents who had intercourse before marriage became pregnant. (Guttmacher, 1976 b)

Some Outcomes of Adolescent Pregnancy

18. One out of three abortions performed each year in the United States is performed on an adolescent; in 1974, adolescents had an estimated 275,000 abortions (Zelnick and Kantner, 1977)
19. Seven in ten young adolescents receive no prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy. Nearly 25 percent of mothers under 15 receive no prenatal care at all until the last few months of pregnancy. (Guttmacher, 1976 a)
20. The death rate for babies born to mothers under 15 is more than twice the mortality rate for babies born to mothers aged 20-34. Mental retardation, birth defects, and epilepsy occur more often among children born to mothers under 20 than to mothers 20-34 years old. (March of Dimes)
21. The maternal death rate for complications from pregnancy, birth, and delivery is 60 percent higher for females under 15 than for mothers in their early twenties. (Guttmacher, 1976 a)
22. The suicide rate among adolescent mothers is ten times higher than the rate for the general population. (Osofsky, 1968)
23. Adolescent mothers are twice as likely as non-pregnant adolescents to drop out of high school; eight out of every ten women who become mothers at 17 or younger never graduate from high school. (Guttmacher, 1976 a)
24. Adolescent mothers are less likely to work and more likely to be on welfare than women who did not have children in adolescence. (*Ibid*)

25. Forty percent of fathers marry their pregnant adolescent partners; as many as two-thirds of the rest provide some financial support for the baby. To do this, most fathers have to interrupt schooling or vocational training. (Nye, 1976)
26. Three out of every five pregnant adolescent brides are divorced within six years of marriage. (Guttmacher, 1976 a)

For complete bibliographical listings, refer to the end of this book.

What's Beneath the Statistics?

Adolescents often do not make the connection between a sexual act and the conception of a baby. They may engage in sexual relations for a variety of reasons:

- to satisfy the human need for physical closeness
- as a way of breaking down feelings of alienation and loneliness
- to erase the label "virgin" in order to feel more grown up
- to gain stature among peers as heterosexually successful; to build a reputation for sexual prowess or experience
- to assert their adulthood to parents who are overprotective and unable to facilitate the healthy separation of their children from them
- as a way of expressing anti-adult, anti-establishment, anti-parent rebellion
- to satisfy curiosity about how it all works; to find out if I'm really a man or a woman
- because it feels good
- because everyone else is doing it

With regard to very young women, recent research indicates that a good number of girls in the ten to 13 age range became pregnant as the result of sexual contact with a male quite a bit older than themselves. They may see the man as a trusted authority figure and not know how to refuse demands for intimacy. Developmentally these young women have even more difficulty making the cognitive connection between intercourse and pregnancy.

There are also some cases in which a girl sets out to get pregnant because she sees a baby as a source of love that she desperately seeks, or as a way to escape from an undesirable home situation, or to satisfy the need to be really grown up and responsible for something important, like a baby, or even as a way to hold on to a part of the boyfriend who is ready to move out of her life.

But these cases are relatively rare. Most young women really don't believe they will get pregnant. And most young men don't think it will happen either. Adolescents who find themselves in the predicament say "I just didn't think I (she) would get pregnant." In probing the rationalizations beneath this kind of statement, counselors have heard adolescents say things like: "I thought I was too young"; "If sexual relations were unexpected, I thought you couldn't get pregnant"; "I didn't use birth control because it would mean that I was a 'bad' person, because that would be admitting that I planned to have sex." Some

young people have articulated in one way or another a basic doubt about their maleness or femaleness in terms of their ability to conceive or father a child. They believe they are sterile and give as evidence, "Well, I had intercourse before and I (she) didn't get pregnant, so I kinda thought that..." or "I'm not a grown up, so I thought I couldn't have a baby yet" or some believed sterility was their "punishment" for having early sexual relations, so they might as well go ahead.

Yet most of these adolescents do know the biology of reproduction. For the most part, they also know how and where to get birth control. But they do not necessarily make the connection between their own sexual activity and the very real possibility of a baby being conceived. Why is this so?

Dr. Carol Gilligan, of the Center for Moral Education at Harvard University, draws on her extensive research with sexually active young people caught in an unwanted pregnancy and finds that there is a very important factor in the relationship between these adolescents and their parents. In the majority of cases, the family has been unwilling to deal with the adolescent's sexuality. So adolescents may find themselves engaging in sexual activity but not really acknowledging it, even to themselves. Gilligan concludes that parents must find ways to communicate to their children that they recognize their sexual maturity and the implications of that maturity. Parents must confirm for the adolescent, "You are sexually mature, and that is just fine. But for a lot of good reasons you should avoid having to face an accidental pregnancy. Let's talk about how you might best handle this matter now and as things change over the next few years." With this kind of open acknowledgement of the young person's emerging sexuality and the demonstrated willingness to help her or him to figure out how to deal with the realities of it, Gilligan believes far fewer young persons would find themselves in a situation that demands they deal with the fact of an unplanned pregnancy, which can have so many difficult ramifications.

Not talking about sexuality in the family seems to encourage adolescents to not think about it in terms of the possible consequences. It just happens to them. They are swept away by those feelings. They are not responsible in their own minds for what happens because thinking or talking about it beforehand is not "proper," unless parents make it plain that it's not only proper but necessary.

Overview of the Next Two Seminars

20 minutes

Spend about 20 minutes previewing the next two seminars, using the agendas found on pages 33 and 57.

We hope that participants will attend every session. Over time, they can grow more comfortable with one another and feel freer to consider the most perplexing issues surrounding communication with their children about sexuality. It naturally takes time to get to a level of trust that permits this kind of dialogue. The three seminars have been structured to encourage the development of a base of common experience; to provide the opportunity for open expression of thoughts and feelings; and to allow the time to reflect on the personal meaning of what has been presented. We also hope parents will go home from each session and talk with their families about the issues that are raised in these meetings.

- Ask parents what they would like to share with their children or spouse from tonight's seminar.

If parents were particularly interested in the tapes of Cheryl and Robert, you might mention that there are more tapes of young people who had to face an unwanted pregnancy that are part of the materials for the optional seminars. See page 108 for a description.

Take-Home Reading

In closing, present a homework assignment: Cheryl says, "I felt like it had to be like everyone in the magazines....I was living up to someone else's expectation." We are all bombarded by social messages that tell us what's "in," what's "good," what's avant garde. For homework, ask parents to take a closer look at these media messages, and bring their findings and observations to the next seminar. Refer to the form on page 30.

Parents may wish to ask their adolescents to help them with this assignment. Such a mutual effort could serve as a basis for discussion in which parents learn more about how their children understand and interpret these messages. The findings they provide will be used as a backdrop for the next seminar topic, "The Sexually Active Adolescent."

Media Messages

Collect samples or observations of media messages that our society sends young people (or all of us, for that matter).

1. For one evening, watch TV shows and the accompanying commercials that appeal to adolescents.

	Message: How is hero/heroine protrayed?	**Moral:** What does it mean to be male? female?
Show A		
Show B		

	Message: Why use this product?	**Moral:** What does it mean to be male? female?
Commercial A		
Commercial B		

2. Listen to the radio for 30 minutes, preferably to a station adolescents listen to. List songs, titles, and/or lyrics of the "Top 10."

Song A	**Message:** The words?	**Moral:** What does it mean to be male? female?
Song B	**Message:** The words?	**Moral:** What is sex?
Song C	**Message:** The words?	**Moral:** What is love?

3. Give examples of messages about masculinity/femininity and sexuality seen in recent movies that adolescents view.

4. Did you hear or read about any public controversy, legislation, or news report this week that dealt with sexuality?

5. Browse through magazines around your home, or at the supermarket, drug store, or newsstand. Look through some magazines you may not have read before that adolescents would be likely to pick up and read. What are the messages?

6. Clip some pictures, ads, titles of articles, cartoons from magazines that send sexual messages to the reader. Bring them to the next session.

Seminar Two:

The Sexually Active Adolescent

Introduction

Responsible parenthood means, among other things, trying to understand our children, ourselves, and the nature of the world in which we live. We are reminded daily that things aren't the same as they used to be, and will never be quite the same again. Thus, we must continually reevaluate what the social and personal changes, as well as the continuities, mean for us. What advice is appropriate for us to give our children in today's world? Can we really give advice at all? One thing is certain: we need to know the facts and we need to remember the power of feelings. We need to examine such questions as:

- What messages about sex are our children receiving?
- What is the nature of adolescent sexual development?
- Do I remember what those early sexual feelings were like?
- How real is the possibility that my own son or daughter is ignorant or misinformed about his or her sexual development?
- How does a sexually active high school student view his or her behavior?
- How should responsible parents respond to the knowledge that their adolescent is sexually active or wants to be?

Objectives for Parents

Parents will be able to:

- analyze some of the conflicting messages about sexuality given by the society, and examine their impact on adolescents and themselves.
- compare the messages they heard when they were growing up to what their children see and hear today.
- read and listen to first-person accounts of adolescents discussing their sexual development and feelings.
- refer to some perspectives on adolescence from experts in the fields of child development, psychology, anthropology, and sociology.
- examine their values as they consider the case study of a sexually active high school couple.
- consider what it means to be a responsible parent when it comes to helping one's adolescent manage his or her sexual feelings and behaviors.

Agenda

Suggested Time (2 ½ hours)	Activities
Preparation	Before the Seminar Begins
15 minutes	1. Media Messages: Discussion of Homework Assignments
15 minutes	2. Reminiscing: What It Was Like When We Were Growing Up
15 minutes	3. Warren: Recollections of a Late Bloomer
20 minutes	4. Excerpts from the Experts: Perspectives on Adolescence
10 minutes	Break
55 minutes	5. Three Points of View
15 minutes	6. How Should a Parent React?
5 minutes	Summary and Preview of Next Seminar

Before the Seminar Begins

Preparation

Secure a record player and two or three currently popular records and have them playing as participants arrive. Select songs that have messages about love, strong feelings, relationships, and sexuality. Album covers may also be displayed. At this writing, some good examples might include songs like:

- "When I Need You," by Leo Sayer
- "Undercover Angel," by Alan O'Day
- "You're Having My Baby," by Paul Anka
- "Afternoon Delight," by Starlight Vocal Band
- "Lord of the Thighs," or most any selection by Aerosmith
- "Tonight's the Night," by Rod Stewart
- "Satisfaction," by the Rolling Stones
- "Dreams," by Fleetwood Mac
- "Love Won't Let Me Wait," by Major Lance
- "Night Moves," by Bob Seger
- "I'm In You," by Peter Frampton

Display several examples of recent magazines you have collected since the last seminar. Typical news and family magazines like *Time, Newsweek, Family Circle, Woman's Day*, etc. should be spread out, along with some copies of *Cosmopolitan, Redbook, Madmoiselle,* and *Teen* (the August 1977 issue is particularly pertinent). Depending on your assessment of the group, you might include examples of more explicit magazines such as *Playboy, Playgirl,* or *Penthouse* to show accurately the wide range of sexual messages that are readily available to adolescents.

As you welcome arriving participants, encourage them to listen to the records and peruse the magazines. Encourage them to share any magazines or ads they may have brought to the session.

1.
Media Messages: Discussion of Homework Assignments

15 minutes

Parents are generally aware that sexual allusions are present in many things young people see, hear, and read. But even among adults who feel they are quite savvy, the plethora of conflicting and explicit suggestions made in the popular culture can be surprising, even shocking. Managing one's evolution from childhood to young manhood or womanhood becomes increasingly complicated as a society's values and attitudes fragment and compete with each other.

Parents cannot pretend that packaged images of what's desirable don't exist, or that they will not touch their children. Instead, they must acknowledge these messages for what they are, and find ways to help their children put such stimulation in clear perspective.

At the beginning of Seminar One, participants wrote and heard some of the messages they would like adolescents to understand about the meaning of sexuality in people's lives. Now the group can look carefully at some of the messages children are actually receiving through the media.

Ask participants to share what they found, using the "Media Messages" sheet (p.30) as a guide. The basic issues to consider are:

- What are the multiple messages?
- How do our children perceive them?
- How can we talk with our children about their meaning?

You might suggest that participants make collages of their clippings. In groups of three or four, they can make picture and headline collages with titles like "On Being Manly," "On Being Feminine," "Sex is...," "Love is...," or titles of their own choosing. The resulting amalgamations of positive and negative, naively wholesome and ultra-sophisticated impressions can be powerful statements about the confusing nature of our society's messages about sex.

Whether or not you have time for the collage activity, one way to summarize this portion of the seminar is to take the simplest statement of the basic dichotomous messages —Do it now vs. Save it for marriage—and have participants call out examples under each heading as follows. List comments on a chalkboard or newsprint, where everyone can see them.

SAMPLE RESPONSES

Do it now!	Save it for marriage!
Chaste makes waste.	Boys really prefer to marry virgins.
If it feels good, do it.	If it feels good, it's either immoral, illegal, or fattening.
Sex with love is fine, but sex for sex's sake is okay, too.	Sex should be part of a loving commitment relationship.
Trust your feelings.	Self-control is what counts. Your feelings can get out of hand. You must be in control of them and your body.
Enjoy your body.	

Take about five minutes to list and discuss the points.

Participants may begin to list responses that fall between the two categories—"It's okay before marriage if..." kinds of entries. This is fine and serves to emphasize the ultimate point of this activity: *teenagers and adults are constantly bombarded with multiple, conflicting, and confusing messages about how to manage their sexuality.* "Our minister says this; Ann Landers says that; my neighbor says something else; Masters and Johnson say something else again." No wonder parents have doubts about how best to help children through this time in their lives. Many adults may not even be sure how best to help themselves!

2.
Reminiscing: What It Was Like When We Were Growing Up

15 minutes

No group of parents can analyze the world in which their children are growing up today without remembering how it was for them. Of course, hindsight can have a way of glossing over the rough spots and romanticizing the good times into something better than they were; but accepting that, are there memories parents would share with one another about growing up?

To facilitate this reminiscing, ask parents to break up into groups of about five people. Encourage them to form groups with people they don't know yet, in order to tap as many different experiences as possible. The intent of this activity is to have parents recall how they felt when they were adolescents. How did they manage sexual feelings and social behavior? No one should feel he or she must share personal experiences. Everyone's privacy is to be respected. But

we hope that memories that participants choose to share will trigger other people's memories, until the group defines how it was for them compared to how it is today for their children.

The questions listed on the discussion guide entitled, "When I Was Growing Up," (p.38) need not be answered by the groups, but each parent should have the opportunity to reflect on them.

Allow the groups about ten minutes to reminisce. Then ask the groups to rejoin into a whole group discussion (but remain seated where they are as the next activity involves the same groups.) Are there any particular comments or group summaries they would like to share with the group as a whole?

When I Was Growing Up

Small Group Discussion Guide

- Do you remember how you felt when you first noticed physical changes in your body?
- When do you remember first feeling especially "male" or "female"? If you are a woman, had your parents talked with you about menstruation before it happened to you? If you are a man, had your parents talked to you about nocturnal emissions before you had your first one?
- When did you learn the "facts of life"? from whom?
- Were the messages about sex from your parents, school, church, and community clear or mixed? What were they?
- What were the main peer pressures regarding sexual behavior that you remember in junior high? In high school?
- How did you handle sexual feelings on dates or with your steady?
- At what age and under what conditions did most of your friends "lose their virginity"?
- Were there any particular misconceptions or misinformation about the opposite sex that caused you or your friends problems?
- Did you talk with your parents or other adults about your sexual questions or feelings?
- Have you talked about any of these experiences with your children? If so, how did they react?

3.
Warren: Recollections of a Late Bloomer

15 minutes

Ask participants to turn to "Warren: Recollections of a Late Bloomer," on page 40. Ask for a male volunteer to read it aloud while others follow along. Afterward they can share their reactions to Warren's account and compare it to their own recollections. They may also wish to discuss the questions below.

There will probably be some discussion of the definition of a "late bloomer." Of course, Warren is not a late bloomer by any arbitrary standard of adolescent development. The important thing is that in his social context he thought he was. This point, among others, may encourage parents to find out more about adolescent growth and development and, in particular, how sexual maturation affects social and psychological development.

This piece is included here because it corroborates in a personal way what scholars tell us is generally true for most adolescents. Parents sometimes tend to think this authentic account is atypical, excessive, or exaggerated; but research indicates that, indeed, Warren's feelings are very common among boys today.

Warren: Questions to Consider

Does this account reflect a typical example of how a young man might view his sexual development today?

Do you think most boys and girls today feel guilty about masturbation? Do you believe this is an issue parents should discuss with their children? What do you think of the way Warren's father handled it?

Are most boys and girls you know aware of "how out of phase male and female development seem to be?" In what ways do girls and boys behave that indicate this awareness or lack of awareness?

What did Warren seek in a relationship with a girl at 13 or 14? at 16? Why the change?

Warren sees himself as a late bloomer. Do you think he is? How would feeling you were a late bloomer differ from feeling you were an early maturer?

Warren says, "As I look back over those years, I'm glad I don't have to go through them again.... It's such a tough time." But adults often say to their adolescents, "These are the best years of your lives!" What is the nature of this discrepancy in perception?

Warren

Warren, now in his early twenties, reminisces about his sexual feelings and behaviors as an adolescent. He grew up in a suburban, middle-class family.

I'm sure my father could have done a little better job of approaching the subject. I remember I was maybe 13 or 14 at the time, and we were going to the orthodontist. The whole way there I saw my father was extremely nervous, and it was really atypical for my father, 'cause he tends to be really calm and relaxed. And all the way back he keeps up this behavior, and finally he turns to me, and he says to me, "Son, have you ever had a nocturnal emission?" I didn't know what a nocturnal emission was, although I thought it had something to do with sex. And I said, "No, no, no." And that was it as far as my father/son sexual talks went.

I know I had masturbated by that time. My first masturbation was about 12 or 13 years old, and I was told to do it by some of the older kids on the block. We were out in the square playing baseball and a couple of the older guys were kidding around and talking about masturbation. I remember they gave us specific orders how to do it, what we should do. And so me and my friend we ran home, and we both went into our own bathrooms. I remember as soon as I got out of the bathroom, I called up my friend and we discussed what happened. We were both amazed, and like that was my introduction into my own sexuality.

It's really funny. It was so open and for the first year or so I remember all our friends used to talk about was masturbation. I turned my friends on to it, you know. It was like a snowballing effect. Soon I think the whole school was masturbating. But then, for some reason, I think once I started ninth grade, it was in the closet, and no one talked about it at all. It was a personal thing. There were a lot of doubts whether you should be doing it, guilt feelings for doing it, and this continues. But you become ashamed to bring it up, and this was really an uncomfortable period, because at that time, I remember for me, I was pretty sexually aware. I remember masturbating quite a lot. A male has a sexual drive, and he has no early release, and the release that he has, especially early on, is masturbation. And masturbation was a guilt and an uneasiness. It's a real uncomfortable time.

One thing that bothered me was how out of phase male and female development seemed to be. I remember, I guess in early adolescence being aware of sexual feelings and sexual tendencies, and at that point there was no female counterpart. You seem to be out of phase with the female component, the female gender. I remember 13, 14, becoming aware of my sexuality, and there were some girls who had already reached puberty and the other girls hadn't quite reached it. The girls who had reached it I thought felt much more mature than me at that age. And they were hanging around with older guys. The girls who didn't quite reach puberty at that point were still really young and immature. And slowly, I think, all the girls passed me.

And so there you are, 13 or 14 years old, with sexual feelings and there's no outlet. I don't think I was ready at that age for sexual intercourse, but you just want intimacy, or something like that, and it's not there. I was just seeking what we now call a Platonic relationship, where you can be with the other sex, and feel comfortable, and just relate, and I think that's a good time to sort of find out about the other sex.

Later on, about 16 or so, you're getting anxious for your first intercourse. Not that you're emotionally ready for it, but now it becomes a macho thing; you're anxious for it and at that point you'll do almost anything for it. Because it's peer pressure. People are starting to have intercourse, you're hearing about it, you're curious about it, and it's an issue. A constant issue.

Now as far as what girls are seeking at that time, we're talking about mid-adolescence, 14, 15, 16 years old. I think all the girls, or most of the girls I knew, were seeking a secure comfortable relationship with a single guy, "pure love"

without the intercourse. So there were always these feelings to manage.

Around my senior year, 17, 18, I know a lot of people who were having intercourse. Not so much sleeping around, but like, all of a sudden, things in relationships start to gel, where the separateness of a physical and an emotional one merge, and then you sort of accept a single relationship. I was probably one of the last ones in my peer group to lose my virginity. I was a late bloomer. Not late in my feelings, but late to lose my virginity. And when it finally happened, it was a real relief. I guess I was about 18 when it happened.

I was in a love relationship, I was really happy with the girl I was with, and we talked about it. It was discussed. And we were both ready. She was a virgin too. We planned. We took precautions. And there was really a lot of love going into it. But the actual lovemaking—I mean once we got into bed and the lights were out, I was so anxious it was incredible, and afterward, I just rolled over, and I don't know what she said, but I just, well, like, I could see it on my tombstone, "He was not a virgin." It was such a good feeling.

As I look back over those years, I'm glad I don't have to go through them again. That's for sure. It's such a tough time. That's why I think it's important for a child to be able to discuss his sexuality. He needs to be reinforced for all his feelings and self doubts and uncertainties, and I think this is the role of the parents. And parents could really relieve some of the guilt about masturbation, for example, by helping a kid put it in perspective. Especially regarding sexuality. I think it's important for the parents to clearly define their values and discuss them with the child. Parents have got to realize what type of examples and values they are setting up and keep the lines of communication open. That's what I'm going to try to do with my kids. At least that's what I say now. It'll probably be hard for me, too, when I get there.

4.
Excerpts from the Experts: Perspectives on Adolescence

20 minutes

Participants can remain in their small groups for this activity. Refer parents to the materials entitled *Excerpts from the Experts: Perspectives on Adolescence* on pages 43-44. Allow about five minutes for participants to read the excerpts. Note that the intention here is not to overload parents with theoretical observations, but to introduce capsule views of some scholars who have devoted their professional lives to the study of adolescence. Suggest that the small groups spend 15 minutes discussing those perspectives they choose as most interesting or perplexing.

If parents are interested in pursuing the issues raised in these pieces further, the accompanying references may help to guide their reading. The group may wish to devote another seminar to this topic, and invite one or two local experts in human growth and development to participate (see page 128). After the small groups have talked for about 15 minutes, you may wish to bring them together for some general sharing about the pieces they chose to discuss.

Suggested ten minute break.

A Time of Multiple Changes

Adapted from Peter Blos, 1970

When puberty begins, young people undergo changes in virtually every aspect of life—in their interests and aspirations, their social and emotional life, and their sense of who and what they are. Young people going through puberty are very concerned about how normal their own development is, and they spend a good deal of time comparing themselves with their friends and redefining attitudes toward their bodies.

Young people must also reassess their sense of who they are socially. They can become rebellious, obstinate, and excessive in their behavior and demands. These are ways of testing limits—their own limits and the limits set by the outside world. One way of finding out who one is can be through discovering who one is not. That is why young people indulge in all kinds of experimental behaviors to sort out what they can and cannot do—who they can and cannot be.

A Time of Multiple Messages

Margaret Mead, 1961

In American culture our children grow up to find a world of choices dazzling their unaccustomed eyes....Our young people are faced by a series of different groups which believe different things and advocate different practices, and to each of which some trusted friend or relative may belong....The list of possible enthusiasms, of suggested allegiances, incompatible with one another, becomes appalling....

A Time for Choices that Define Me

Erik Erikson, 1968

Critical decisions about occupation, marriage, and family relationships are typically made during adolescence. It is a time when individuals must discover who they are, who they will be, and how they will fit into the world. It is at this time that the young person faces the "crisis of identity."

Identity can be defined as the capacity to see oneself as having continuity and sameness. In other words, individuals need to see themselves as being basically consistent and dependable in their feelings, actions, and reactions.

Arriving at this sense of identity is the central task for young people in adolescence. For contemporary societies where the search for self can be extremely difficult, part of adolescence should be a time when choice may be deferred and experimentation permitted.

Society's Regard

August Hollingshead, 1949

Adolescence is the period of life when the society in which a person functions ceases to regard him as a child yet does not accord him full adult statuses, roles, and functions. In terms of behavior, it is defined by the roles a person is expected to play, is allowed to play, or prohibited from playing, by virtue of his status in society....The most important thing about the adolescent years is the way people regard the maturing individual.

Girl to Woman

Carol Nadelson, 1977

The adolescent development process is a complex series of physical and emotional changes occurring within a family system where the reactions of each member to this exciting, confusing and, at times, frightening sequence profoundly influence each other. Menarche [onset of menstruation] confronts the adolescent girl with immutable physiological changes which have multiple implications, are difficult to understand, and over which she has no control. She may experience changes in feeling, mood, and behavior which are unpredictable and perplexing.

Inconsistency, unpredictability, and ambivalence are the hallmarks of the evolutionary process toward adult goals...The final goals of the maturational process are the development of a stable self-image, a sexual identity, and the concept of self as separate from parents. These processes do not proceed in a fixed and orderly sequence, but they evolve at varying rates, as does physical development. Thus, in the course of the development of a self-concept, the young adolesent girl does not necessarily integrate the perception of herself as a physiological woman,

capable of procreation. The consequences of sexual activity may be perceived in vastly different ways, and often there is little understanding of the consequence of sexual acts.

...From the abundant literature on the emotional status and the life history of sexually active teenagers and their families, it is evident that the majority of these youngsters are neither very disturbed nor promiscuous. What is more consistently reported is the lack of contraceptive use and the poor understanding of sexuality.

Through all of this process, parents must be able to acknowledge the emerging womanhood of their "little girl." They may be anxious, uncertain and threatened by her maturation for many reasons including its implications for them, and the issues of separation and aging it raises. A new parental identity must emerge. Inherent in the development of self-identity for both adolescents and their parents is understanding of the need for separation and the resulting formulation of individual life goals and commitments.

Hurry Up and Wait

George Geothals, 1977

Adolescence is marked by a tremendous growth spurt which can literally occur overnight. The whole body changes, which in turn forces change in one's whole social presence. It is a time during which the young person has to come to terms with his or her own sexuality and the issue of intimacy. A major adjustment for the decade between ages 15 and 25 is to reconcile one's sexual interest and potential with a culture which officially states that the only place for sexual activity is within marriage; and, in our society, we typically defer marriage until after occupational status has been at least approximated. This leaves a hiatus in many lives of around ten years to find acceptable ways to work out needs for sexual intimacy.

The Need for Closeness

James S. Coleman, 1974

Today, for many youth, their most intimate psychic bonds are with one another. The evolution of the dating pattern probably shows this best. Traditional societies, whether rural America or pre-1960 Europe, show little in the way of "dating" at all. The practice developed in the high schools and colleges of America, first among a small elite in the colleges in the 1920s and 1930s as a pattern of courtship fitted to the campus life in which large numbers of marriageable young were thrown together on their own. It moved down to the high schools on a broad scale in the 1940s, where it replaced the parentally supervised and much less intimate outings, gatherings, community dances, parties (which often included not only youth but adults as well). In high schools, dating became not so much a pattern of courtship as an opportunity for intimacy and closeness. In the 1950s the dating system began to break down, under the force of a new phenomenon that developed out of it; "going steady." Going steady reduced the uncertainty inherent in the competitive market of the dating system, and simultaneously intensified the psychic intimacy that had been begun by the dating system. Going steady appears to provide for teen-agers the same kind of psychic sypport that the intense husband-wife relation in the nuclear family provides in modern society; a psychic haven in a society where other relationships have become increasingly distant.

But in the late 1960s and 1970s, going steady is being followed by a new pattern, which is enhanced by the drug culture, in both high school and college; a pattern of closeness, intimacy, and extreme openness among a small group of close friends, often around a marijuana joint which passes from one to another.

This evolution of social pattern has a single thread running through it; the increasing need for close relations, for the psychic support and security of another or others very close. Those needs have always existed for young persons, and for persons of all ages. But the difference now is that young persons turn much more to other young persons than they once did....

This element of a psychic need for closeness... probably is an important stimulus to the use of soft drugs and to the religious movements among the young. It is an aspect of youth's current situation which helps spawn activities that are very unlike, but tied together by this one need.

5.
Three Points of View

55 minutes

This seminar session has thus far given participants the opportunity to analyze samples of today's media messages about sexuality, to reminisce a little about their own adolescent years, to discuss a young adult's recollections of his more recent "growing pains," and to scan some scholarly perspectives on adolescence. Each of these activities represented a slightly different approach to the meaning of sexuality to adolescents. At this time, it seems appropriate to focus on the meaning of adolescent sexuality to parents by seeing these forces play out in the life experience of two very real young people, Michael and Jean, and in the response of Jean's mother.

Ask participants to turn to the Michael transcript on page 46 and read along. Then play the Jean tape and refer participants to the transcript on page 48.

At this point there are probably parents in the group who support Jean's mother's actions and others who feel it is wrong. Both value positions can be forcefully argued for and individual parents must make their own decisions about what to do or say to their own adolescents about the issue of sexual activity. Regardless of where people stand at this point, all will be interested to read Jean's mother's perception of the situation, and her reasons for helping her daughter get the pill.

Ask participants to turn to "Jean's Mother Speaks," on page 50. Ask a volunteer to read it aloud to the group, or read it aloud yourself. Parents may follow along, marking points they wish to explore at the end of the reading.

After the reading, encourage parents to raise any points briefly on which they would like to comment. The places they marked in their transcripts probably indicate points of strong agreement or disagreement, and are therefore worth analyzing. After hearing her views in her own words, does their perception of Jean's mother as a responsible parent change?

Michael, Jean, and Jean's Mother: Questions to Consider

Both Michael's father and Jean's mother share the same value position but have obviously communicated with their children in different ways. What effects did these different ways of communicating their value positions have on the behaviors of Jean and Michael?

What if an adult's perception is that a 17-year-old can't possibly understand what it is to be in love, but their child believes he or she is in love? How can they have dialogue about this? How can parents avoid driving their child toward destructive behaviors?

Michael

Michael, Jean's boyfriend, is 17. This interview took place two months befor Jean's interview, just prior to the time their relationship became a sexual one.

I'll be 18 in April. Last year I really wasn't involved in love. I used to go out with girls, with a lot of girls. I really never said to myself, "Why am I going out with so many girls? Why don't I just find the girl that I really want, that I really like?" I liked them, but I never really knew inside of myself that I really loved them, like I really love Jean. I really do. And up to this year I never felt that I really loved somebody. I'd call them up and it'd be just little games, little kids' games, but I'm a little bit older now.

Some people ask me what I think love is. When I tell Jean I love her, the reason that I love her is because I can talk to her. We've got a really good relationship. I can say anything I want to her and she can say anything she wants to me. One thing I don't like is yelling, when you talk in a loud voice. I've never done that in my life. I've never yelled at anybody in my life. My father yells at me a lot. He yells at everybody else, and I can't stand it. I have to leave the house when people yell. I can't stand it. That's the one thing I've always told Jean—if I'm going to love you, the one thing that I love you for is that you can be reasonable when you talk. She's that type of person. I love her for the things she does. You know, she's a special person. She's done a lot of things.

Love is seeing her get places that she has never been before, doing things that she wants to do and she's never done before, and achieve the things that I want her to achieve, and especially that she wants to achieve. And I think she feels the same way about me. She'd like to see me do things that I want to do, achieve the things that I want to achieve. To me, that's a touch of what love is. A lot of people tell me, they say, "You're crazy, you're crazy, you're only 17 years old. How can you be in love with anybody? You shouldn't be doing stuff like that." And I say, "Hey, I really don't care. That's the way I feel."

My father always told me that sex was wrong, that I should never have sex. If my father wasn't Catholic he wouldn't think there was anything wrong with sex and that's his religion. The church tells us that sex is wrong until you're married. I couldn't believe that, you know? I don't agree with religion because some of the ideas are good and some of the goals they set down, some of the things they say are right. I agree with them 100%. But on the other hand I don't agree with some of the things they say about sex. That's probably the main reason I don't really like to go to church.

My father would never have sex if he wasn't married. He's got a housekeeper he's been living with for four years (my mother died when I was 14) and he's never had sex with her, and he wants to marry her. He's always told me, and my mother always told me, that sex was wrong. My grandmother, when I used to live with her, used to tell me that, I don't know how I should say this, but I should never hold my penis while I go to the bathroom. Now that's kind of ridiculous, you know? It's something that you have to do and whether you want to do it or not. I think that's wrong. Maybe I don't know if that's sex or not, but that's saying that you shouldn't do something to your body. Now, if I can't do that, then obviously somewhere sex is wrong.

I don't think sex is wrong, so I had to learn about sex on my own. I had to research on my own. When I was 13, I always wondered about sex. I signed these things saying that I was 21 years old, and I got three books, very well written books. I can't remember what they were right now. So I got these books. They were pictorial books, and they had a lot of literature in it, and I read them. It's not only what sex is, but how you should go about having sex, certain ways of sex talk, how you should go about saying that I want to have sex with you, or that I want to make love to you. You know, stuff like that. But I learned that on my own because I didn't think it was wrong. Now, I respect my father's opinion on it, but I don't agree with it. I don't agree with him about sex being wrong.

I really don't know why that was put in my head. I wish it wasn't. I'm never gonna put that in my kid's head, I'll tell you right now, because sex is a big part of life. Somebody is going to always have sex with somebody else, whether you're told not to or not. And I don't think you should be afraid of doing it.

You can talk about sex and there's so much behind it. There's so much involved, there really is. There's a lot of psychological, emotional things. You know, what your parents have said, what you feel.

Sometimes I really don't feel comfortable having sex 'cause I think back in my head that this is wrong. I can't stand that. I'm trying to say you should understand what you should do and do the things that you want to do. You were ten years old and your parents told you sex was wrong, it's different. I'd want to explain to my kid that it's not wrong. It is wrong in some aspects. I don't believe in having sex with just anybody. I think that sex is something you share with someone that you love. That's one of the things I'd say to my kid. That's the main thing I'd say. First I'd explain what sex is, what it's all about, how you do it, what you should do, what you shouldn't do. I'd never tell my kid, "I don't want you to have sex with someone that you don't love." I wouldn't say that. I'd say I don't think it's right, you make your own decision as to what you feel. I don't think he should feel uncomfortable in doing anything. He should feel comfortable.

I never had sex with anybody until I was 15½, almost 16. And even then, when I was 16, I looked back on some of the things that I read when I was 13 or 14 and I said, "Now's a nice time to apply them, I guess." And then I understood them. Before I didn't. I mean, I said, well, there's the books, now what am I gonna do? Because at the time I was interested in what sex was all about, but I wasn't interested in engaging in any of that sex because I was only 14, and you really can't get into sex because there's a little more behind having sex than just having it.

Sex to me is having a loving relationship. I never have. Well, I have before, but only because I never realized what sex was all about. But I did have sex with a girl that used to live in my town. I had sex with her when I was 15. It was wild because I never had sex before and neither did she, so it was an experience for both of us. It really wasn't uncomfortable because we both experienced something that was new, so it really wasn't uncomfortable by any means.

When I say sex, I think of just foreplay. I don't think of sexual intercourse when I say sex. I never had sexual intercourse until I was 16½. I think it's much easier for a male to understand sex, to understand his own sexual feelings and his own body chemistry and what he has to do to release his tensions or whatever. Because there's a lot involved in the female body chemistry and it's hard to understand. I can understand it now. When I read about it before, I didn't see how it was possible. I could never see how all of that could go in a space of 12 inches, all in your stomach and below. I didn't understand how that was possible. I didn't even worry about it because I thought that you just had sex and that was it.

It's not easy for a man to say I can have sex with her, but if he doesn't care whether or not she's worried about having sex or she's worried about getting pregnant or she doesn't understand anything about sex. Then it's uncomfortable for the both of them.

A lot of people just really screw around and it's too bad. There's no reason to talk about contraceptives if you're not having sex. As soon as you're having sex it's time to talk about protective measures. I don't like contraceptives. I mean I don't like the pill, I don't like that at all, 'cause I don't believe in drugs. Using a Trojan, I wouldn't do that because it's like I wouldn't put a wet suit on to take a shower, you know? I mean my examples are really bizarre but that's not why you're having sexual intercourse. You're not having sexual intercourse to prevent having children. That's not the reason you're having it. That's something that you gotta exert, but that's not the reason. I don't think I'd enjoy having sex with the Trojans. I wouldn't have Jean on the pill. The only thing I can think of that I would use was, my girlfriend would use the diaphragm. I don't think anything else would be practical.

Well, I've talked to Jean about going to the doctor, because Jean is prone to cancer. I'd go with Jean. And I don't think that Jean would go with her girlfriend because it's our problem, it's our relationship. If the doctor's gonna say something about it, I want to be there to understand what he's gonna say to both of us. I wouldn't let Jean go alone because I'd be uncomfortable. It's our relationship. I'm having something to do with why we're asking the question.

My sister had a baby when she was 16. It was a very weird thing when my sister had it. When she was 16 and I was 15 my father said to me, "Your sister's in the hospital; she's going to have a baby." But it's funny, I just never figured my sister would do something like that. And that's why it was left so long. No one said anything about any of it. That's why it took so long, until finally she was gonna have the baby and there was nothing you could do about it. Because I don't think I could accept the fact that she was really pregnant, and I didn't think that it would happen.

That's the problem with my father. He never said anything about it. He never said what you should do. He never said you gotta use contraceptives. That's the problem. She never knew anything about it. That's the reason why she got pregnant. She never knew what she was supposed to do. That really turned me off, I'll tell you, when she did that. She gave the baby away for adoption. And that's how I got here. I was put into this world because somebody made a mistake. They had a kid. I was adopted. I don't know how old they were, but 17 years old, 18 years old. They weren't even married. I'm never gonna make that mistake in having a kid or two kids or three kids when our relationship isn't gonna work out, 'cause I'm not gonna put those kids through a divorce, okay? You know, that's something to think about. I mean it's not a nice thought but it's there. It happens every day. That's really unfair, that really is unfair.

I'm pretty independent actually. My mother died when I was 14, and since then I've been pretty much on my own because my father's really busy. He's a rich guy, he makes money, and works and works and works. My father is my father, but I don't talk to him too well about too many things. That's why I really like Jean because I can talk to her about anything. We've really got a good relationship. To be honest with you, if I was 25 or somewhere around there and I met Jean, I'd marry her. I really would, because I like her. I wouldn't think of getting married now. I'm 17 years old and you can't think about marriage, but if I look in the future I'd like to marry the type of girl that I'm with now.

Jean

Jean is a 17-year-old high school senior. She and Michael, her first serious boyfriend, have been dating for about a year.

I met Michael in school. We went to elementary school together, 'cause he lived in the same town and everything. And then we went out through junior high, and then high school, almost all of high school together. So, I've known him for a long time. I think we just started dating at first on and off and then we started seeing each other like every day for about three months. And I knew that I was going to have to make a decision about this; if I was going to have sex with Michael.

We both thought about it and we talked about it. It wasn't really, there was no pressure or anything. We just talked a lot about it and at first I really didn't want that at all, 'cause I had never even been really that serious with a guy before. I had never wanted to be that tied down and that just meant something really serious. And Michael was ready for it. He said that he wanted that, that he wanted to be tied down and then it just gradually grew into something more and more. Everybody says you shouldn't sleep with anyone until you're married, and I'd always felt that way. I always thought it was just something for when you got married.

And I said that to him. "How important is this to you? What are you giong to do if I say no, I don't want to sleep with you?" And he said, "Then I'll still be with you, but I want to because I think it will make our relationship

much stronger." He wasn't playing games, he wasn't saying, "If you don't, then I'm going to leave," or anything like that. He really gave me time to make my decision. And I did make my decision and I decided that I did really love Michael, and that if you really love somebody, there's nothing wrong with it.

It's not like all we're thinking about all the time is sex. That's not the only reason we go together, we do lots of other things all the time. So I don't think it plays a huge role in our relationship. I just think that it has brought us a lot closer together. I think it makes me care for Michael much more and I think it makes Michael have a more deeper caring for me.

We decided that we had to get some kind of birth control right away, but then we didn't really know how to go about it or anything. So I came in to see my mother one day and I talked to my mother about it. We've always had a really open, honest relationship. We've always just talked about everything. We don't just pretend something's not happening. We've always talked about things. And I think that's why I can talk to her so easily. For so long before I told her, my head was all jumbled up. And I wanted to tell her, but I was afraid to tell her. I was disappointed in myself and I was afraid she'd be disappointed in me. But I knew I had to because I wanted to tell her.

I knew in the long run she would be good about it. I didn't know what her first reaction would be. I was just sitting there and I was saying, "Ma, I have to tell you something." And I couldn't say, I just kept on saying, "Ma, I have to tell you something." She's going, "What? What?" And I couldn't say it, I didn't know how to say it. I didn't know what to say. I didn't want her to drop dead on me. I think she said, "Are you pregnant?" And I knew at least she was on the right subject. I said, "No, I'm not pregnant, but you know, Michael and I have been sleeping together and I wanted to tell you that. And I think I'm really nervous and I think that I should get some kind of birth control. And she said, "Well, that's definitely what you've got to do, that's the first thing you've got to do." So then Michael, my mother, and I talked about it.

It's not like she's so permissive, and says, "Oh, go ahead, I don't really care." She knew that I had made my decision and Michael had made his decision and she was just glad that we trusted her and could confide in her. I'm not very close to my father at all. I don't feel that I want him to know. I don't feel that he has to know. I didn't think he had to be involved. Michael's not very close to his father. I'm sure he has an idea, because Michael's never had a girlfriend for so long but we've never sat down and just talked to him about it. A lot of parents, you wouldn't believe just how naive they are, they have no idea of what's going on.

Sometimes when girls get birth control pills it's like saying, well, she's being a naughty girl all the time. You're taking pills and it's like even before, it's like all the time reminding you that you're sleeping with someone. I was nervous about talking to the doctor about it. It was kind of like admitting that I was doing this and I felt like that would be admitting I would be doing it all the time.

But I don't think it's changed my relationship with Michael. I think it's changed it in a good way because Michael will go into the store and get the prescription. Michael will bring a pill to me and say, "You've got to take this." It brings Michael into it kind of. It's not like I'm taking these and thinking to myself, he doesn't even care, just as long as I take these pills. Because he does, and so he kind of plays a part in that.

Mother was really uptight about if Michael really loved me and if Michael was really going to stick around. She was a little worried at first. She said, "Are you sure that this is what Michael wants and is Michael responsible?" or if this was really just kind of a fling for him. That got me thinking about all that. What kind of commitment that I wanted was to know that Michael really loved me and really cared for me and it wasn't just another girlfriend and he wasn't going to decide that in two months he was tired of me. I was kind of telling Michael all the time that he didn't really love me, and this and that, but then I realized that he really did. I think it brings commitments and responsibilities. I feel really loyal to Michael.

I have a big thing about people who are disloyal, and people who just run around and play around with other people. I hate that.

My other friends are still running around, trying—I think a lot of them really want a serious boyfriend, but a lot of them don't have them. So I don't see them as much anymore, because, I don't know, I'm really different when I'm with them. They're still running around chasing guys and stuff and I don't want to do that.

When one of them found out, she was, she didn't really say much of anything. She was kind of surprised. I only told my really closest friend about it after she just asked me point blank. I don't think she really knew what to say. A few of my close friends are having sexual relationships with their boyfriends. They're girls who are also just like me. They just mostly see their boyfriend now and they don't see their other girlfriends, who they used to hang around with a lot. I made the decision that I wanted to spend more time with Michael than I was with my girlfriends, so I feel that I've really changed a lot just from not being with them all the time. And sometimes I miss going out with them because a lot of times they have a really good time. But I have a good time too. It's different because I'm not seeing them as much, but I'm still having a good time.

I think it's made me feel a lot better about myself. It's made me feel a lot more secure to have Michael there. It's brought me a lot closer I think to my family, especially my mother. I'm home so much more now. I was out every single night last summer. I was never home, ever. Now I am home.

Sometimes I think, what would it be like and do I think Michael is the person I'd like to be with all the time for the rest of my life? I don't know. Before I never wanted to be with somebody all the time, and now I love to be with Michael. I don't look way ahead and say, "I've got to marry Michael," or "Michael's got to marry me." I don't even want to think about that because we both have a lot more to do before we even decide that we're going to get married.

Michael thinks that I'm definitely in his future and he wants me to say the same thing, but I don't like to. I don't see why we have to talk about that now. If it's going to happen, it's just going to happen. We've still got a long time.

Jean's Mother Speaks

A year ago, if I had heard that a mother helped her daughter to get birth control pills, well, I would have been very uncomfortable about it. I would have felt there was something wrong about it—that it was encouraging her daughter to have sex. I hated to hear things like that. I've always tried to be a really responsible parent, and I certainly didn't think anyone who has the right values would even consider doing that. But a lot can change in a year. I had seen my daughter change from an active, always-on-the-phone or out-with-her-girlfriends-all-of-the-time person to a young woman who was letting one of the boys, whom she had always held literally at arm's length, get close to her. Almost overnight, Jean and Michael began sitting closer together on the couch, or leaning against each other while they watched TV. In the back of my mind I worried about what that meant. Although she had had lots of boys who were close friends in her group, this was her first real boyfriend, but I felt sure that anything more intimate between these two was still a long way off.

I know I had felt angry when her father said nastily to me one day about our older daughter, "You had better get her on birth control pills or something." But he refused to say anything more about it when I tried to talk with him. He just walked out.

While I was trying to reassure myself about my own daughter, I began to hear disturbing things about other people's daughters. I heard that Susie Hotchkins up the street, a young girl who had gone to school with Jean, was pregnant, and was trying to decide whether to let the baby be adopted, or keep it. Susie's parents said that she was at boarding school, but all the kids knew the truth. And Jean talked about Janet Manners, too. Only she had had an abortion, and then she ran away from home, and they didn't find her for days. And when they finally did find her, she was

a mental wreck. All her friends talked about it on the phone.

So, even though I wasn't consciously dealing with Jean's close friendship, I was aware that all of a sudden all these lovely young girls I had known and liked since grade school were somehow "women." Inwardly I wept for them and their families. When Susie's mother collected for the heart fund, I didn't know what to say to her.

Anyway, somewhere in my head I guess that I was going over all the alternatives that these girls were faced with, and I was beginning to realize that none of them were good. Jean was such a child still, in so many ways. She was certainly not ready in any way to be a mother.

There was no way that I could be a substitute mother for a baby. I had to work to keep our house going. There was just no way that I could assume the care of a child of hers. Abortion? We were not able to put our old dog to sleep and had nurtured every wounded creature that came our way. Do those sound like silly analogies? Those are the images that run through your head—little Jean trying to feed a baby squirrel by helping it lick milk from her finger. Abortion? How could we do it? And adoption—could we ever give a baby away? And I say "we" because in so many ways Jean was still a child and in no way ready to make that kind of decision on her own. I really couldn't see us dealing with any of those situations.

So the day she came to me and told me what was happening with her and Michael, I guess I was relieved to know that we didn't have the decision to make about what we would have had to choose if she were pregnant. I thanked God that she wasn't. She was so downcast and feeling that maybe she was a bad girl and that I was going to be terribly disappointed in her, that I couldn't feel those things. I just wanted to get her to a doctor and get her some help. She said she wouldn't do it any more. But I knew that that promise was probably beyond keeping, for where emotions are stirred, it is hard to stop them. And Michael seems to love her and be so needing of her love. She is a loving, caring person, and if she had responded to this need in him before, it was foolish to depend on her not doing it again. Once there has been that kind of full response, I think it's really almost impossible to go back again.

It was strange, and not easy to go to the doctor with them, for the three of us went together. That's the way Jean wanted it. But that was the worst time, really. They are very private about their lives together, so private, really, that sometimes I wonder if their relationship has much sex in it. All I know is that in many ways, things seem better. She is home more now. And she talks more to me about what she is thinking, about plans for college. I have had to get over the feeling that somehow I am a bad person for helping my daughter to get birth control. I feel that I have preserved for Jean time to think through who she is and what she wants. I feel that I have helped to protect Michael, too. And most of all, I feel that I have protected a baby from coming into the world unwanted. I feel that I have had to become a responsible parent in a new way, and in a way that my parents never had to be. But parenting is always a responsibility. I think that Jean and Michael are learning sincerely about that too. I hope so.

6.
How Should a Parent React?

15 minutes

What does it mean to be a responsible parent these days when it comes to the issue of sexuality? Jean's mother's response to the knowledge that her daughter was sexually active is only one of a number of possible responses. It may or may not be appropriate for other families faced with the same issue.

Refer participants to the "Possible Parent Responses" sheet (page 53). Encourage parents to think about possible reactions and to consider the one(s) they think would be most effective if they learned their child was sexually active, or was considering becoming sexually active.

After reading over the responses, some parents may want to share their thoughts. Others will prefer to react privately. Encourage all of them to reflect on the responses, and to discuss with their family or friends the alternatives and the potential impact on their adolescent's behavior. Remind parents that although it may be hard to do, the time to think about what they will do or say is now, before their own Jean or Michael comes to them with a problem. Sooner or later, every parent must decide how he or she can be most helpful in guiding his or her adolescents toward healthy acceptance of both their sexuality and their reponsibility to themselves and others, even those yet unborn.

Possible Parent Responses: How should parents respond to the knowledge that their adolescent children are sexually active?

1. Say nothing; don't acknowledge the situation.
2. Tell them you're outraged by the behavior and forbid them to have intercourse again. Clearly restate your belief in chastity before marriage.
3. Tell them you feel that if they are old enough to engage in sexual intercourse, they also must be old enough to handle the responsibility for and the consequences of a pregnancy; therefore, you will encourage their handling of birth control but will not actively participate in getting the pill, etc. for them.
4. Neither condemn nor condone the behavior. Tell them their personal lives are their own private business, and you don't want to be involved. You have done all you can to guide them to this point.
5. Insist they talk with someone else—a teacher, guidance counselor, minister, psychologist, doctor, neighbor, or relative—to sort out what they're doing and what should be done.
6. Call the parents of your child's partner and try together to work out a strategy for dealing with their intimacy.
7. Forbid your child to see his girlfriend or her boyfriend again; severely restrict social opportunities.
8. Kick your child out of the house, to make plain that you will not tolerate that behavior under your roof as long as you're supporting him or her.
9. Tell your child that you accept the fact of his or her sexual activity, and trust that he or she will behave with respect and caring toward the partner. See to it that he or she has accurate birth control information and access.
10. Buy birth control devices and/or books on sexuality and leave them in the adolescent's room with a note that if he or she wishes to talk with you about it, you will.
11. Take away the car or some other important privilege like an allowance, party, or trip as punishment.
12. Other _____

Which of these responses would you, as a parent, feel most comfortable with at this time?

Which of these responses would probably be most helpful to your son or daughter as he or she struggles to manage sexual feelings and behaviors in a healthy and responsible manner?

Summary and Preview of Next Seminar

5 minutes

Briefly summarize this seminar session, and encourage parents to share what has gone on here with their spouses, children, and friends.

Underscore the importance of considering the issues covered in this seminar by highlighting the following facts:

- **More than 11 million teenagers are sexually active today—an estimated 55 percent of all teenagers.**
- **Only about 20 percent use contraceptives regularly.**
- **Sexual activity results in about 700,000 unwanted pregnancies per year, which conclude in:**

  —300,000 abortions

  —200,000 out-of-wedlock births

  —100,000 miscarriages

  —100,000 hasty and often short-lived marriages*

Given these facts, how should parents communicate with their children about this very important part of life? Tell the group that communication between parents and adolescents is the focus of the third seminar, "Parents Can Help." Conclude by previewing the agenda for that seminar, which is found on page 57.

Take-Home Reading

As take-home reading for next time, hand out Ann Landers' piece entitled "High School Sex and How to Deal with It: A Guide for Teens and Their Parents."

*These figures come from "A Pregnant Pause in the Sexual Revolution," by Donn Byrne, *Psychology Today*, July 1977, p. 67.

Seminar Three:

Parents Can Help

Introduction

During the past two sessions, participants examined some facts and feelings about adolescents and sexuality. Many young people today are sexually active. Those who are not are no doubt coping with the social pressures, the physical and emotional changes, the fears, and the confusing messages surrounding sexuality that bombard all adolescents. So, what should parents do? How can parents love and guide their children most effectively, and help them become well informed? How can parents influence choices that will increase their happiness, their competence, and their sense of healthy sexuality? How can parents and their increasingly independent adolescent offspring communicate about the sensitive issues of sexuality that get tangled up with issues of separation and attachment, of autonomy and dependence, of adult status and child status? These questions were touched upon in the last seminar, and are explored further in this one.

This session delves into a central moral and ethical issue surrounding adolescent sexuality—whether to give teenagers standards of behavior or contraceptives or both. Participants discuss the issue and then hear tapes of three conscientious parents describing how they dealt with the dilemma and talked with their children about it. Participants also consider the observations of an experienced family counselor, who comments on some factors that affect parent-child communication. Next, they identify some critical barriers as well as doors to improving dialogue with their own adolescents. At the end of the seminar, they review a list of sample questions adolescents typically ask about sexual development, values, and behavior.

In this process, it is hoped that participants clarify their values and begin to define which approaches to communicating with their adolescents about sexual issues are best for them.

Objectives for Parents

Parents will be able to:

- examine further their own sense of responsibility about communicating with adolescents about sexual decision making.
- consider alternatives that some parents have used in discussing sexuality with their adolescents, and consider their probable long- and short-term effects.
- clarify their own values about such issues as the role of sexuality in human relationships, premarital sex, contraception, the rights of children to make personal choices, the role of parents in helping children make wise choices, and the meaning of responsibility in sexual decision making at every level.
- assess changes or affirmations in their own thinking about adolescents and sexuality that may have occurred during these seminars.
- find out more about the specific kinds of questions young people are asking about sexuality.

Agenda

Suggested Time (2 ½ hours)	**Activities**
30 minutes	1. Standards and Contraceptives
60 minutes	2. How Three Families Communicate with Their Adolescents Mrs. Barber Mr. Frank Mrs. Graham
10 minutes	Break
20 minutes	3. Reflections on Parenting
15 minutes	4. Factors in Effective Parent-Child Communication: Some Observations of a Family Counselor
10 minutes	5. Where It's At Revisited
5 minutes	Overview of Seminar Four
	Take-Home Reading

1.
Standards and Contraceptives

30 minutes

Assemble participants in small groups of three to five. Encourage them to sit with some people other than those who were in their small group last time, once again to foster exchange of different perspectives. (One desirable outcome of these meetings would be for participants to feel they got to know several other parents well enough to call on them in the future to discuss thoughts or strategies or problems faced in talking with their own children. Opportunity for interaction in small groups fosters this level of getting to know people.)

The task in this activity is to come to grips with what might be viewed as a basic dilemma most parents of teenagers face.

Ask participants to turn to the newspaper columns on pages60-62, which appeared in the *Boston Globe* in the summer of 1977. Ellen Goodman is a regular feature writer for the *Globe,* and on June 14, 1977, wrote the piece entitled, "Teenagers and Sexuality." Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who has long been concerned with the issue of adolescent pregnancy, took exception to the Goodman article and presented her opposing position on July 18, 1977, in the column headed, "The Absence of Loving." Ellen Goodman, in turn, wrote a clarifying response to Mrs. Shriver on July 12, 1977. The issue framed in this public debate is the heart of the matter for parents trying to make up their minds about how to approach the topic with their children. After hearing the arguments, where do participants stand?

Participants may read the three columns and dicusss them in their small groups using the questions on page59.

Goodman and Shriver: Questions to Consider

1. Goodman advocates making contraceptives available to sexually active adolescents "not to promote sex, but to deal with its reality." Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. Shriver believes our teenagers have values and need support and wonders why we "keep treating them as though they have no power to make choices, no ability to say 'no' as well as 'yes.' " Do you believe adolescents have the ability to make sexual choices for themselves?
3. From her observation and experience, why does Shriver think many young people engage in early sexual intercourse? Do your personal observations bear this out?
4. What is Shriver's recommended solution to the problems surrounding adolescent sexuality? Is this a realistic approach to the problems or, as Goodman views it, an "idealistic" and "callous" call that results in "double punishment for those children already in an environment where no one cares enough"?
5. In her second article, Goodman asserts that in advocating access to birth control methods she is not opposed to standards, but that in some people's minds those who are opposed to access are somehow viewed as the only ones advocating chastity, strengthening the family, and raising children with moral standards. Do you agree with Goodman that one can advocate both? Is there really a dilemma here?
6. How would you discuss issues of standards and contraceptives with your child?

Teenagers and Sexuality
by Ellen Goodman

It would be easier if growing up were a more cooperative venture, if our bodies and minds and emotions were fellow-travelers. It would be easier if kids couldn't open a bottle until they were smart enough not to drink the stuff in it, if they couldn't ride a bike until they were more cautious about cars, if they couldn't become parents until they were able to take care of the children.

But the route from childhood to adulthood can be dangerously unsynchronized. Because of this, we try to protect our kids. We buy child-proof bottles, appoint crossing guards at the school yard, and support driver's education to ease them onto the highways.

We do it in an attempt to protect them, even from their own mistakes, because society has a vested interest in helping kids to bridge the most treacherous gaps on the way to adulthood.

And yet, we have made an exception. The adolescents of this country—those who can bear and have children at the same time—have been left unprotected in the area of sexuality. For the past several decades we have chosen to pretend that we can prevent teenagers from being sexually active rather than protect them from the worst consequences of this age gap—pregnancy.

Though half the population of 11 million teenagers between 15 and 19 are sexually active, we have continued to make it difficult for them to get information about birth control and to buy contraceptives for their own use. In the name of "sex prevention" this negligence has been at least partially responsible for the rise in teenage pregnancies. Today, one out of every 10 teenage girls becomes pregnant every year, a rate higher than that in 18 other developed nations.

Last week the Supreme Court took a first major step in removing some of the barriers between teenagers and birth control. They struck down a New York state law that banned the sale of non-prescription drugs to anyone under 16 years old. At the same time they ruled against two other provisions in the statute, one that said only licensed pharmacists could sell these contraceptives and another that prohibited companies from advertising or displaying them. There are similar laws in more than 20 other states that will also be affected by this ruling.

In the decision, the 7-2 majority rejected the old argument of the state of New York that freely available contraceptives would increase sexual activity. They also overruled the dissent of Justice Rehnquist, who fumed about "the right of commercial vendors of contraceptives to peddle them to unmarried minors through such means as window displays, and vending machines located in the mens' rooms of truck stops."

Justice Rehnquist's fantasies aside, the point is to bring contraceptives to sexually active teenagers to turn the old barriers into conduits. Not to promote sex but to deal with its reality.

Short of locking the entire teenage population in their rooms, the only thing that adults can do is to "help" them avoid the most permanent and disastrous of consequences.

Each year more than one million teenagers become pregnant. Of these 30,000 are under 15. Teenagers have a third of all the abortions in the country (yet how little we hear from the anti-abortion groups about fostering birth control).

Twenty-one percent of pregnant teenage girls give birth out of wedlock, with 87 percent keeping their babies. Of these girls, Arthur Campbell wrote in Journal of Marriage and the Family, "Suddenly she has 90 percent of her life's script written for her. She will probably drop out of school...she will probably not be able to find a steady job that pays enough to provide for herself and her child...her life choices are few and most of them are bad...."

Yearly, teenagers give birth to 600,000 children, which means that one out of every five American infants has a teenage mother. But more importantly, less than a third of these mothers wanted babies. They became pregnant largely out of ignorance and inaccessibility of birth control.

Ignorance and inaccessibility...these are issues that the adult population can deal with in terms of protecting the children.

The Supreme Court decision will help. But as Dr. Daniel J. Callahan wrote in a Planned Parenthood study of teenage pregnancy, "At the very least, teenagers should have as much knowledge of sex, as many and as good services available as do adults....

"The most we can do is to help them avoid those things we know will hurt them, help to reduce the impact of those acts (even of folly) which they have already done, help them in a word to make it through the teenage years with as little lasting harm as possible."

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The Absence of Loving
by Eunice Shriver

Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister of the late President Kennedy, is executive vice president of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation, which is concerned with teenage pregnancy.

Recently, Ellen Goodman wrote in her column: "Short of locking the entire teenage population in their room the only things adults can do is help them avoid the most permanent and disastrous of consequences—(pregnancy)."

She was talking about the 600,000 teenage girls who gave birth to babies in America last year. Planned Parenthood calls teenage pregnancy an "epidemic." Newsweek calls it a "plague." I find such statements shocking and demeaning—to parents because they are dismissed as failures; to teenagers because it implies they are without values, or if sexual values are held they are nothing more than raw pleasure principles. Nowhere do I hear a suggestion that teenage intercourse can be controlled. Nowhere is the opinion expressed that teenagers might want to control it. Nowhere is it suggested that society itself may be encouraging teenage sex and then hypocritically condemning its results.

For more than 25 years I have worked with teenage girls. And I have been concerned with the complex causes and often tragic outcomes of teenage pregnancy. In the 1950s as a social worker at the House of the Good Sheperd in Chicago and the Penitentiary for Women in Alderson, W.Va., I worked among girls who were often the victims of terrible social pathology—broken families, poverty, uncaring communities. Their pregnancies resulted not from love, but an absence of love. Not from caring, but from an environment in which no one cared enough.

Since those years the situation has worsened. I have talked to girls in cities throughout the country. There is little that is romantic, passionate or loving in their life stories. Over and over I hear the refrain, "everybody's doing it." "He won't like me if I don't."

In a hospital in New York, one 14-year-old pregnant girl told me, "I can't talk to my mother. And I have no Dad. My older sister has a baby and she isn't married. So, what's wrong?"

You don't have to look far to see what's wrong. Coming from families where there is no communication, where the family itself is torn by overwhelming social, economic and even moral dilemmas, many young boys and girls engage in early sexual intercourse as a search for love and a human relationship. In a life lacking warmth or security it is often only the sexual partner who, however fleetingly, provides this love.

And then, of course, there is the world around them. The seductive world of sexual permissiveness, where advertising magazines, movies, television, the public figures they admire most, all encourage them to value sexual desirability above everything else. From toothpaste to deodorants, from clothes to cars, we sell our products with the implied message that they will provide us with sex.

The idols of our teenagers are entertainers whose open living arrangements, divorces, pregnancies and abortions are reported as casually as the weather. The teenager can indeed be considered a victim of glamor, excitement, the promise of total freedom. And society provides few moral supports to make responsibility and control worth even considering as alternatives.

Yet I believe our young people want support and do have a sense of values. Why then do we insist on treating them as if they have no power to make choices, no ability to say "no" as well as "yes"?

The fact is that teenagers did march against the war in Vietnam. They did demonstrate against the segregation of blacks. They serve as Vista volunteers in city slums and migrant camps. I personally know of teenagers who quite literally spend all of their leisure time helping a mentally retarded brother or sister qualify for Special Olympics, a sports program designed for the retarded.

But when it comes to the problems of dealing with teenage sexuality, people seem to throw up their hands and look for some all-purpose mechanistic solution to suppress its results, rather than to confront its causes. Some suggest that all pregnancies of unwed mothers below a certain age should be aborted. Others propose bringing contraceptives to all sexually active teenagers. But giving a teenage girl the Pill will not strengthen her willpower nor solve her social or emotional problems. We know that within five years, half of these girls have their second pregnancy. None of these mechanical solutions deal with the real problem.

Instead of focusing only on ways to eliminate teenage conception or prevent the infant from being born, we should be repairing the shattered network of communication among families and their children whose breakdown is responsible for so much adolescent sexual activity. We should be looking for times and places to strengthen these families so there will be less reason for teenagers to feel rejected and less need to go elsewhere for love.

Let's create opportunities for personal commitment within the family and in the community—encouraging families to have meals together, to do sewing and carpentry together, to play games, listen to music, do chores, join neighborhood organizations together—not each one going off on his own.

If we listened to our teenagers we would discover that they do have values. These values and convictions are developed through work, the family, courage, sacrifice, and commitment. Over the years I have discovered that teenagers would rather be given standards than contraceptives.

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It's No Place for Children
by Ellen Goodman

It's not that I mind being used as a strawperson. Some of my best friends are strawpeople. But by the end of reading a long article Eunice Kennedy Shriver recently published in response to my column on contraceptives and teenagers, even I began to wonder if I had come out against loving families and in favor of adolescent sex.

Mrs. Shriver—the mother of five and a woman much admired for her work with retarded children—wrote that "when it comes to the problems of dealing with teenage sexuality, people seem to throw up their hands and look for some all-purpose mechanistic solution to suppress its results, rather than to confront its causes...Instead of focusing only on ways to eliminate teenage conception or prevent the infant from being born, we should be repairing the shattered network of communication among families and their children whose breakdown is responsible for so much adolescent sexual activity."

She ends with the observation that "over the years, I have discovered that teenagers would rather be given standards than contraceptives."

First, let me say that Mrs. Shriver and I are not poles apart in our attitudes toward adolescent sex. I can't imagine a 14-year-old—17 percent of whom were sexually active in 1973—able to handle the complex set of feelings that accompany sex. Nor can I imagine that sexual experience being part of an intimate, sharing relationship. Sex without intimacy and trust is sterile, confusing, as dehumanizing as the scoring bars and [illegible]ed battlefields of the so-called Sexual Revolution. In short, it's no place for children.

I'm also in favor—who is against it?—of strengthening the family and raising children with standards.

But I am surprised by the assumption that you must either be in favor of contraceptives or of standards, that you are concerned either with causes or results. The notion—apparently shared by Mrs. Shriver—is that the people in favor of access to birth control methods are opposed to standards, while the people who are opposed to this access are somehow or other the ones upholding the standards.

Birth control is to prevent pregnancy, not to promote sex. The conventional assumption has been that "the Pill" was responsible for the rise of sexual activity. But this is ironic when you consider the facts about teenage sex. In a 1976 Planned Parenthood Study, 80 percent of sexually active teenagers reported that they had sex at some time without birth control. Fifty percent of them hadn't used a contraceptive the last time they had intercourse. If birth control promoted sex, then surely we wouldn't be worried about 600,000 teenage births.

Well, what about families? Mrs. Shriver believes that the breakdown of the family has caused the rise in teenage sexuality and she sees a cure in strengthening the family. Ironically, the least stable of these families are often those created out of the disastrous teenage shotgun marriages of the previous generation.

It is no doubt true that many teenagers seek love-through-sex outside the home, and that many parents are so pressured or weakened themselves that they offer no support to their children. If I were king, I would assign every child to a family environment that nurtured, understood, and loved them. But wishing for that, even working for that, doesn't change reality for the children in the troubled adolescence now.

The idealistic call for repairing "the shattered network of communication" can be realistically callous, a double punishment for those children already in an "environment in which no one cares enough."

But are families "the cause" of teenage sex? My antennae receive an additional message. Parents often comfort each other with the assumption that they are "in charge." If they feed their children the right emotional nutrition, the youngsters will grow up bearing the same standards. But 11 million sexually active teens didn't all come from homes without love or without standards. Nor did the pregnant girls and their partners all emerge from what Mrs. Shriver describes as "a life lacking warmth and security." There is no 100 percent guarantee that protects kids from pressure, from experimenting and from mistakes. Ultimately, as parents, we "hope for the best."

Those who advocate the education about and availability of birth control are not advocating sex versus chastity. We are not choosing to deal with results and rejecting causes.

We are talking about only one thing: sex with or sex without risk of pregnancy. We're talking about the very real, quantitative difference in a girl's life between a sexual experience that ends in pregnancy and one that doesn't. That difference is called contraception.

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2.
How Three Families Communicate with Their Adolescents

60 minutes

The families represented in the tapes you will hear illustrate three of many possible approaches to parent/child communication about sexuality. These parents are mature and responsible adults who are now in or have recently been through the period during which their adolescent children have matured physically and socially and formed close relationships with boyfriends and girlfriends. All their children are now in late teens or early twenties. Fresh from experiencing these critical years of parenting, Mrs. Barber, Mr. Frank, and Mrs. Graham here share their respective thoughts and feelings about adolescent sexuality and describe how they have talked with their children about it.

Play the tape of Mrs. Barber, encouraging participants to read along on page 65. Afterward, allow ten minutes for discussion in small groups. Some "Questions to Consider" are below.

Play Mr. Frank's tape, encouraging participants to read along on page 66. Then allow discussion for ten minutes of the questions on the next page.

Play Mrs. Graham's tape, encouraging participants to read along on page 68. Then allow discussion for ten minutes of the questions on the next page.

Mrs. Barber: Questions to Consider

1. From Mrs. Barber's account, how would you describe the Barber's communication with their children? What are some of the factors which have influenced the communication?
2. Mrs. Barber says it's been hard to talk with the children about sexual matters because when she was growing up "you just didn't talk about such things." If a parent finds himself or herself in that position, what are some things that might help?
3. Mrs. Barber says she would like to see an emphasis on the "spiritual" aspects that a couple share. If a relationship is based primarily on the physical, she wonders "how it can last." Do you agree with this point of view? Why or why not? Either way, how would you communicate your value position to your adolescents? How might they react?
4. Mrs. Barber says she simply does not understand why young people engage in premarital sex or like to live together without marriage—"if they're not thinking in terms of children, I don't know why they're getting involved." What are some responses young people who are in sexual relationships or living together might give her? How do you think adolescents you know view this phenomenon in society today?

Mr. Frank: Questions to Consider

1. How would you describe Mr. Frank's relationship with his children? Do you think he seems to have a realistic view of both his son's and his daughter's sexuality?
2. How do you think a parent like Mr. Frank would react if he knew his daughter were using contraception? If she were to become pregnant? If his son were to father a child out of wedlock?
3. Mr. Frank says he thinks it's "a nice thing for a woman to be able to say, 'I was a virgin when I married you.' " He thinks this is "never important for a man." Do you agree with this statement of the double standard? How do you think today's young people (especially women) view this?
4. Do you think that the atmosphere in the Frank home would help or hinder their daughter's asking for advice on a sexual matter? their son's asking? Mr. Frank places greatest emphasis on transmitting attitudes about sexuality within the family relationship. What are some of the indirect ways attitudes toward sex are communicated to children at home?
5. As a parent, would you also say to your kids that "the door would always be open," and that you would help them no matter what they did? Why or why not?

Mrs. Graham: Questions to Consider

1. How would you describe the Graham's method of communicating with their children about sex? What was the heart of their message as Mrs. Graham describes it?
2. What do you think about the way Mr. and Mrs. Graham responded to their daughter's request for birth control? What would you have said or done in that situation?
3. Mrs. Graham believes sex should be part of an exclusive relationship. Suppose you held that value position and your son or daughter viewed it differently. How would you interact with him or her in the face of such a basic value disagreement?
4. What if you know your child is "tweaking you"—how do you react? How can you tell the difference between a tweak and a genuine difference of opinion? Can parents and children effectively agree to disagree on matters like this? Why or why not?

Mrs. Barber

Mrs. Barber and her husband have three children. Their two sons, Paul, Jr., and Morgan, are basically "on their own" and not married; their daughter Cyndy still lives at home when she's not at college nearby. The Barbers have some deep concerns about society putting too much emphasis on sex and the influence this is having on all young people, including their own. A strong mutual religious background, which stresses mind over matter, the spiritual over the physical, gives support to the Barbers' belief that sex belongs only within marriage.

Well, I suppose I would be termed old-fashioned in the way I feel about it. I would like to see them reserve sex until the point where they're married, and I guess it's just the old-fashioned view of dating and becoming engaged and getting married and starting a family, because I think that's essentially what it's all about, is the family group. Our whole society seems to be saturated with talk of sex. I am, at this point, I don't know if the word is "fed up," we're absolutely overwhelmed at some points with the whole total picture we're getting through the media.

I really think there should be a different emphasis in our whole society. Because what I'd like to see is more emphasis on, well, maybe this is going to sound silly, but the spiritual aspects rather than the material aspects of living. I think that if a relationship is based primarily on a physical basis, it isn't a sound relationship. I'd like to see it based more on the qualities that the two individuals express—joy, happiness, activity, an understanding of each other—and be able to discuss problems with each other. It seems to me one thing is to share some common interests in either hobbies, or sports, or study, or some goals that they enjoy sharing, working toward together.

That's frequently what brings people together. Those qualities and that working basis can grow over the years and I think that's a sound foundation for a relationship; in the physical relationship, I don't know how it can last, if that's all that the two individuals share. That's just an animal sort of attraction.

Young people should realize that they have to be responsible, and if they choose to have premarital sex with the idea that a pregnancy may result, they've got to be ready to be responsible to deal with it and not many of them are. An awful lot of the young people today are not thinking in terms of children, and if they aren't thinking in terms of children I don't know why they're getting so involved. I would love to talk with some of the young people about why they like to live together without marriage. It doesn't penetrate as far as I'm concerned, and I'd like to talk with some of them to find out why they feel this way.

The peer pressure seems to be so great and so oftentimes we as parents look at them and say, "No, you're not old enough to do this." "Oh, but yes I am." All of their peers around them, they're all struggling to establish their own identity and being someone and striking out for their own freedom, thinking in terms of, "Well, I am old enough to be free of this restriction or that restriction and I want to test these things out for myself." And they think they're old enough and parents look at them and say, "Well, that's all well and good, but you really aren't old enough, because you don't understand the whole—what you're asking for," I suppose. Well it's just growing up, a process of learning to be on their own; it's that period in their life. It's oh, it's a period in families with a great pulling and hauling and stress, and you wonder sometimes if you're going to make the grade.

Sometimes when these things come up it can be such a shock that you really don't know what to say or what to think about it, and instead of an explosion at that moment, if you have some time to think about it and get the whole thing in perspective, then perhaps you can talk about it in

a more intelligent way. And I think as we've so often read in books, well, frequently hear people say that you should talk with the children and not let them learn on the street corner or from their friends who really don't know and, you know, that's not reliable information.

We perhaps could have served them better if we had talked more with them. As far as our actual conversations, I think they started rather late in our family experience. It took a lot of breaking down on the part of ourselves as parents, because when we were growing up you just didn't talk about such things. I mean, you just couldn't even find out the facts of life in a forthright manner, so that we started out as a generation, most of us, knowing practically nothing and it's only through our experience with our growing families that we have been able to begin to talk about things, and I think they have helped us to talk. But I think as parents with a growing family, it's always a challenge. That's what a family's all about. There are always things coming up that parents are learning as the young people are always learning. If we can continue learning, we may be helpful as grandparents at some later stage.

But I think as parents with a growing family, it's always a challenge. That's what a family's all about. There are always things coming up—that parents are always learning as the young people are always learning. If we can continue learning, we may be helpful as grandparents at some later stage.

Mr. Frank

Mr. and Mrs. Frank have two children, John and Amy. The family background is one of deep cultural and religious tradition that Mr. Frank feels supports the double standard that he sees as acceptable and even necessary. Mrs. Frank is a nurse. Mr. Frank is grateful that she could always answer the children's specific questions about sex and reproduction in the proper medical terms, but he feels the most important thing he and his wife have done is instill a healthy "attitude" toward sexuality.

To come out and talk about teenage sex and say what is right and what is wrong, I think it's a very difficult thing, because there are no two people alike and there are no two relationships alike. I don't feel I'm capable of making judgments on general teenagers, but I can speak for my own children. My daughter is not a girl who goes out on very many dates; she is a one-guy girl. At the particular time, she's undergoing a relationship now; she's been seeing the same young man for about two years. And if a relationship builds and a relationship gets closer and a relationship lasts, it's going to lead into one direction, sexually. And that direction can at times become uncontrollable. I venture to say that she's still a virgin. How close to not being a virgin she is, I don't know. I don't know. I wouldn't want to know about it. I wouldn't expect her to come to me and say we did this or we did that. I feel that she is a very serious-minded individual and would consider a sexual experience, whether it be a stepping-stone to marriage or—it would only be with someone that she was truly interested in and someone with whom she had hoped to head toward the altar with. And I think she's still a virgin.

My son is two years younger than my daughter, and he was the inquisitive one. My daughter was not inquisitive. She had no real concern as to how the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees all came about. But I can recall distinctly my son coming up to us and saying to us one Saturday morning, "All right, never mind the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees. Give me the story." And at that point I went, "Uh, uh... " and I said, "Roz, take over." And she did, and he accepted it. He has always asked more questions. He always jokes more about it. And I find that to be a reflection, I think, of what he's thinking. You can joke about sex, but I feel that many jokes come out of truth. And many things said in jest carries a great deal of truth with it. My daughter, for example, will come home, and I'll look at her and I'll say, "Where were you last weekend?" "Don't worry, Dad, I still got it." Well, you know, that's because I prompted the statement. On the other

hand, I will hear my son joke about certain things, so that I must conclude that it's on his mind more than it's on her mind. With him, the joke would be, "Where did you leave it?", not "Have you still got it?" "Where did you leave it this week? Or tonight?", or, I don't know.

I notice now my son is beginning to sow his oats and I think he's having sexual relations. I've brought the subject up, and his answer was, "Oh, don't worry. I know about this and I know about that." And my answer to him directly was, "Well, there are rubbers right in the drawer, and come, I'll show you where they are." And his answer to me was, "I know where they are." Now, that in of itself said something to me, and if he came back and said he was having a relationship, I would in no way, shape, or manner say it would be a surprise. As long as she was taking the proper precautions, or he was taking the proper precautions, it wouldn't bother me one bit.

I would be more concerned with my son's approach toward his mate and his treatment of his mate than I would be about saying to myself, "He's had all kinds of experience sexually. He'll handle her like nothing and keep her happy." "Wham, bam, thank you ma'am" teaches you nothing. My concern would of necessity be for the girl he's having it with, not with my son, because I think it's a far more traumatic experience for her, and I think she is standing the greater risk, on childbearing possibly, and I still feel the traumatic experience is greater for the girl, whether it be my daughter, or whoever my son is having a relationship with. Because I still feel that if a woman can say to a guy, "I was a virgin the day you married me," I think sooner or later in a lifetime it is a rewarding statement to a woman. Sooner or later in her lifetime, when she can look that guy in the eye and say, "Hey, buddy boy, we did this and we did that, but the day I married you, I was a virgin," to my way of thinking it is still a nice thing for a woman to be able to say. And I think it's a reward to her.

A man is a different creature. It is never important for a man to say that you were the only woman I slept with. A man has to prove his manlihood, and I think also that a man has some sexual sense that has to be satisfied more so than a woman. Being old-fashioned, I guess I am somewhat, I feel I still keep a double standard, and we have not reached that point where things are equal as it relates to male and female. And I feel that consequences are different, approaches are different, and I think a man has a greater opportunity to break out of a relationship a lot easier than a woman. With a woman, I think a woman has, uh, doesn't have the opportunities a man does, in that regard. It still has a greater psychological effect on a woman than it does on a man. There are double standards in my thinking and I think in the world today. I won't say in 100 percent of the cases, but I will say in a great majority this country is still run on double standards. And I don't find that to be wrong. In fact, I prefer it that way.

Whatever values we have been able to get through to our children have not been in conversation or in answering direct questions. I think it has been through experiences, through the intangible feelings that you create in a household and that you more or less pass on to your children unconsciously. Now these things may be insignificant, they may be meaningless at times, but it is still something the children see in a home. For example, they know we do have relations. They don't hear us talking about it, they don't hear us complaining about it, they don't hear us bragging about it, but they know we have relations. And I think the fact that we don't talk about it all is an indication that it's a satisfactory relationship, and knowing how important we feel it is, they must know that we're being satisfied that way.

I don't think discussing sex, discussing the whys and wherefores, and the hows and the how-nots, is meaningful. I think it's meaningless, and I think all it is is cause for confusion. Attitude is something that I think can be transmitted, but that attitude, again, you cannot pick up in a question-and-answer period. Attitude has to be something developed over a number of years, and that is something I hope the kids have acquired through the years, living under the same roof as

we did. And a family relationship is something that thay have seen and hopefully have felt throughout their lifetimes. The sexual relationship, as it relates to a question of love, a question of affection, a question of concern, is in my opinion all a part of creating a relationship, a family relationship. Being satisfied in that family relationship is an important part of it.

Any parent who says that his communication is ideal with his child is a fool. In our family conditions, it's no different. But you hope that they know a sufficient amount to carry them through. I hope that over the years I have communicated sufficiently with them to let them know what I consider to be right for them. If it was right for me, and I'm happy to say that to this point it's been right for me, that it hopefully will be right for them. I've always been a believer of leave the door open and what happens, happens under my roof, and regardless of what they did, I would leave the door open, I hope. And that's what life is. Life is only hope. You never know what the hell is going to be tomorrow.

Mrs. Graham

Mrs. Graham is the wife of a minister and they have been married for 23 years. They have two teenagers: a daughter, Emily, and a son, David. Over the years they have thought and read a great deal about the role of sexuality in human relationships. They believe young people need and want limits, even sometimes arbitrary ones, but they say they have tried to maintain a flexibility that recognizes that their children are in a different world than the one in which they grew up. Mrs. Graham discusses the responsibilities of parents to talk with their children about sex.

I don't know when we started "sex education." I guess it's a continual process that starts when they are very little. I guess some of our strategy, if there was any, was to talk between ourselves when the kids were there. But a lot of the sex education for our kids was just my talking about either people or situations, situations in the schools, so-and-so is pregnant; sometimes I would ask the kids how they feel about it. If there was anything that I sort of brought across to them it was, don't be afraid of your own sexuality. It's there and is an important part of your life. I wasn't harping continually on human sexuality, but I do think it is a fairly important aspect of life. We certainly talk enough about education, how you should drive a car, and spend a great deal of time preparing kids for that responsibility, and so I probably didn't talk more about sexuality than I did about the responsibility of driving or various responsibilities you take in employment, or that kind of thing.

I can remember telling the kids I thought they should wait until they were 18. I sort of made a judgment and picked the arbitrary figure, and thought if I could hold them off until they were 18 I would feel comfortable. Also, there would be an accumulation of 18 years of experience and the opportunity to have some other kinds of sexual relationships that don't include intercourse, which I think is also important for kids. How do you handle the pre-intercourse type of relationships? Do you pet with a guy? How do you put your arm around a girl? How to dance with a girl without palm sweating? You have to know what kinds of feelings you have inside of you and have had experiences with that before you can go right into a sexual relationship.

When our daughter turned 18, she called my husband and I into his den and said, "I want to talk to you about birth control." She had been going with a boy for about six months, maybe eight months, and they had decided to do "it." She said she wanted our response, and we said we would not condone it and we would not condemn it—that she had to make her own decisions about her sexuality, but that she was also responsible for her sexuality. Then she said she had decided to have a diaphragm or whatever, and would we pay for it, and we said no. That she had to pay for it herself. That she was responsible for it, and we were not. This was something we were not going to participate in. She had to make her decision; she had to do it. The whole thing has to be thought of in context, and that is that I felt this was a very appropriate sexual relationship and that it was a good relationship. That it was meaningful; it was an

exclusive relationship. He was a sweet boy. I felt they knew one another very well, and it was an appropriate thing that the two of them should experience the thing together.

I would not have wanted a marriage to occur, because she was only 18 years old and the boy was 19. I think there has to be something to the relationship. That is one of the things I have said to the kids, that sexual relationships should be exclusive. I believe that it is a good thing in a sexual relationship. There is a difference in being sexual and having a sexual relationship, and being promiscuous. I try to get the point across that you don't jump into the sack with every nice guy you meet. I guess that is one of my values, and I would like it to be one of my kids' values. Yet it doesn't throw me into a panic and into a tailspin if my son says, "Well, I don't see it exactly that way." The important thing for me is that my kids take responsibility for their sexuality.

My husband is a little more flippant superficially about the whole sexuality business, and he says he had one sex education lecture for the kids and that was, "I will not babysit." Meaning don't get pregnant, and don't get somebody else pregnant. We haven't talked to our son as much about responsibility for preventing pregnancies as we did with our daughter, and yet God forbid that he got somebody pregnant who decided they wanted to keep the baby. That would terrify me. It would upset me. I think he is too young to get married, and I also think, gee, I'd have a grandchild out there somewhere.

We haven't talked to our son, and I thought about it, particularly this summer. He has been less open with us about his sexuality, but he did come home this year dropping clues like bombs and in effect saying, "I'm not a virgin anymore," and being pleased about it. He was being perhaps a bit reserved about it. We said, "What was your single most either important or exciting experience when you were away," and he said, "If mother will leave the room, I'll tell you." Then he sort of laughed. I said, " Skip that, and tell us your second most." He said, "Same thing." So we assume he had some kind of sexual experience, and he seemed to be very pleased.

When my husband and I got married, we were both virgins, and we said that to the kids, and said this is not necessarily a good thing. It's not bad to be virgins when you get married, but it's not necessarily good either. I think you can have a good relationship with somebody and don't necessarily have to get married. Being sexual before marriage is not an evil thing. We have tried to say sex is good and normal, but private. It is something between two people, and not too much of anybody else's business. You have to realize I came from an era that very few of my friends had any premarital sex. It was a sin. There is no other way to put it. It was a sin. It certainly wasn't touted in my day and age as being something wonderful. These kids are still young, still maturing and still growing up, and somehow if you have any influence you want to influence them in a way so the whole thing is a good experience, a constructive experience, and is not in any way destructive. I have found in those kinds of circumstances that more questions are appropriate. To say, "Well, in this case, would you think that it was appropriate?" The only thing you can hope for is some dialogue. The only thing you can hope for is to not say anything that will close the discussion.

The other thing I know is that my kids, and I'm not sure if this is true of all kids, but I think probably it is, like to tweak me just a little bit. For instance, David would say, "Well, I think it's just fine to sleep with a different girl every night." I don't know if he really means that. I think he's trying to get some response. Not necessarily, but....So they are trying to pull a little bit out of you, too. For me that says, okay, I'm a big boy or girl now. And they are, and should be responsible for making those decisions. I can't make them for them.

3
Reflections on Parenting

20 minutes

Reassemble the participants for a large group discussion, which will give them a chance to pull together their reactions to the tapes and compare the alternative stances parents can take and the effects they can have. In the process, each person will be clarifying those value positions he or she agrees with, disagrees with, and is uncertain about.

As leader, you may wish to select one or two of the trigger questions from the following list, or you may prefer at this point to encourage the group to probe an issue of particular confusion or interest to them. This discussion period should serve as the summary shakedown, sorting out, and pulling together of their thoughts and feelings about what is appropriate for them to do about communicating with their own children about these issues.

1. Which of these parents do you feel is most realistic and on target in terms of understanding where adolescents are in their physical, social, and emotional development? Why did you select that parent?
2. How do you think the responses of Mrs. Barber, Mr. Frank, and Mrs. Graham would differ if they knew:

- their daughter was in an intimate relationship and using birth control?
- their daughter was not using birth control but was deeply involved with a boyfriend?
- their son was in an intimate relationship and using birth control?
- their son was not using birth control but was deeply involved with a girlfriend?

3. Do you think any of these parents could be viewed as irresponsible? Why or why not?
4. To which parent do you think your own children would respond best? What qualities in that person would "make points" in your child's mind?

4.
Factors in Effective Parent-Child Communication: Some Observations of a Family Counselor

15 minutes

Refer participants to Neil Hickey's article on "Factors Influencing Good Dialogue Between Parents and Adolescents" on page 71 and allow about five minutes for participants to read it.

Factors Influencing Good Dialogue Between Parents And Teenagers

Neil Hickey has been a social worker and family counselor for over 16 years. He has assisted many adolescents and their families in improving communication about a variety of issues, including sex. From direct experiences, he offers some thoughts on parent-child communication.

Parents who talk most effectively with their children are parents who have practiced talking with each other. I think if the husband and wife have had any practice talking between themselves about sensitive issues, it's a good start in transferring how they relate to one another to include another member of the family. Parents who have the most difficult time talking with their children are parents who have forgotten what dialogue is—a give and take. If you are used to conversing with people you care about, it will be easier to approach your youngster on issues you feel ought to be approached. It may not be easy, but it's not going to be impossible, because the pattern of relating is already there. If parents can maintain dialogue, not just chit-chat, over the table, then it's not that difficult to transfer that skill to talking with their children. Of course, I don't think it can easily start at age 16. There are so many cues about how a child views sexual matters from the age of five or six years, cues that parents should be responding to. An atmosphere in which the child knows it's okay to ask questions should be established early; but if it doesn't start until 16, it's not the end of the world. It can still be managed.

One of the things that is helpful is for the parent to have a good handle on his or her own sexuality. If a parent is clear about where he or she is sexually, dialogue with a child is going to be far easier than might be anticipated. Parents don't have to be totally together in their own sexuality at the particular moment the topic arises. If they haven't completely sorted it out, they should be willing to admit that. It's okay.

But believe it or not, parents already have a big head start in the area of speaking about sexual issues. As parents, they have some sense of a meaningful sexual relationship themselves. It's an issue they're dealing with every day. Rather than taking it out of context and saying, "I must talk to my youngster about certain issues that have sexual connotations," it's better to frame it as part of the family situation. It's something every parent has had to deal with for 30 or 40 years of his or her life, and it may not be as difficult to talk about as one may think. Parents are already experts. If a parent works from the assumption that "it has been a part of my whole life and I know more about sexual issues than my child does," it can build a kind of confidence.

It can be very appropriate for the parents to talk to a child together. Of course, sometimes having both parents in on an initial discussion may not be best, because a youngster can view it as a two-on-one situation, and parents should be sensitive to that.

Traditionally, mothers have talked with their daughters and fathers with their sons about sex. I think there's been a kind of silent taboo against fathers talking with daughters and mothers talking with sons about sexual matters. This is unfortunate, because the opposite sex parent is often better able to pick up clues and give advice about relationships from a different perspective. A father can be a kind of sounding board for his daughter, because he can better sense how a male might react to her feelings. It's healthy for a daughter to get feedback from her father about relating to her male friends, and the same goes for a mother and her son.

I see nothing wrong with a parent stating his or her moral expectations. I think that's a part of parenting. I think one of the realities is that the offspring is either going to choose it or not choose it, and that the parent is going to have very little control over that. But the parent has more than a right, has an obligation to let a child know where he or she stands on sexuality. Even if one can't impose one's sexual standards on the adolescent, at least the adolescent can get a better understanding of where the parents stand. I think that gives the youngster a frame of reference to say, "Okay, that's their standard, and now I have something to bounce my standard off of." And

most likely, the youngster will fall somewhere in between your standards and his or her own standards, after bouncing back and forth a few times.

I have had parents say to me, after they found out their children were sexually active, that the reason they never talked about the subject was because they didn't think their children were active. They thought that bringing up the issue would stimulate the child into activity. Well, I don't think talking about sexuality encourages experimentation. There may be some kids who might take the discussion as a green light to go ahead, but I think, by and large, people I've talked to feel that, if anything, when the subject was raised in a supportive family environment, the kids felt less of a need to experiment. The kind of security that they may be looking for in a relationship outside of the home doesn't seem as pressing. All of a sudden they see a little bit more security in the home in terms of parents communicating, "Well, I'm not going to like it if something happens, but I'm not going to abandon you." I've heard kids say that talking with their parents has given them good reasons to delay becoming involved in a sexual relationship. And having a chance to put things in words also gives them some ways to express that to their peers.

I don't think it's hard for parents to communicate that they love their kids. But it may be understandably difficult for them to accept the child's struggles toward sexual maturity. Perhaps a first step toward accepting one's child as a sexual being is simply to listen.

5.
Where It's At Revisited

10 minutes

As the final activity in this seminar, remind participants of the "Where It's At, Pass the Hat" activity at the beginning of Seminar One. Bring out the cards on which they wrote the three messages they most wanted to give their adolescents about managing their sexual behavior over the next few years. Read through them quickly to refresh memories of where this group began its deliberations. Then ask the group to comment on whether there seem to be any changes in their thinking or feelings from that first session. What points of view were reinforced? How have people grown and changed most? Are they more or less confident about their abilities to communicate with their children? Have they found support from one another?

Overview of Seminar Four

5 minutes

The fourth and final core seminar will focus on some specific strategies for parent/child communication. Participants will be able to try out some "talk starters" for later use with their adolescents, if they wish. They will also practice listening and presenting their values and beliefs to another person. And they will have an opportunity to decide if further sessions would be useful. Go over next week's agenda to give a clearer picture of the session.

Take-Home Reading

Ask participants to turn to "Questions Adolescents Ask about Sex," (p.74) and "Why Sex Education Belongs in the Home," (p.79) as a way of setting the stage for the next session. The questions were submitted in writing in 1977 by a group of over 300 tenth-grade students in a suburban high school. They were responding seriously to a request from a group of teachers and parents studying the possibility of adding a comprehensive sex education course to the curriculum. The students were asked to write down any and all questions that they would like answered concerning sexuality.

Not many parents or teachers could answer all of the questions, but they do give us a sense of the sophistication, the misconceptions, the fears, and the confusions that are common among adolescents. Dr. Sol Gordon's article, "Why Sex Education Belongs in the Home," appeared in the February 1974 issue of the *P.T.A. Magazine*. It encourages parents to talk with children, and offers some suggestions and "moral guidelines."

Questions Adolescents Ask about Sex

These questions were submitted in writing in 1977 by a group of over 300 tenth-grade students in a suburban high school. They were responding seriously to a request from a group of teachers and parents studying the possibility of adding a comprehensive sex education course to the curriculum. The students were asked to write down any and all questions they they would like answered concerning sexuality.

Anatomy and Physiology

1. What age must a girl be before she can get pregnant?
2. At what age do boys become sexually mature?
3. What controls the time when sex hormones begin to do their jobs?
4. Why do both sexes have some of the other's hormones, and how do they affect us?
5. At what age do men lose their virility?
6. What is a hymen? What is the function of the hymen?
7. Can a girl break her hymen without having intercourse?
8. If a woman lost her ovaries, would she have any physical femininity?
9. If a man were castrated, would he lose his masculinity?
10. Why are males stronger than females?
11. Is the place where sperm comes out the same as where men urinate?
12. What is a "wet dream"? How often do guys have them?
13. What is an erection? What kinds of things make erections happen?
14. How can guys control their erections?
15. What does an erection feel like?
16. What is circumcision? What are the reasons for it?
17. Does the penis have to be a certain length to get a girl pregnant?
18. What makes breasts grow? Why are some larger and some smaller?
19. Do girls with bigger breasts have stronger sex drives?
20. Can a girl change the size or shape of her breasts by exercise, pills, etc?
21. Do large breasts get diseased or sag more easily than small ones?
22. What parts of the body other than the genitals are sexually sensitive?
23. What turns a girl on?
24. Please discuss a gynecological exam.
25. What is a douche? Is it a good idea?
26. Is something wrong if you have one testicle lower than the other?
27. Do girls have "wet dreams"?
28. What if your vagina is too small for a penis?

Menstruation

29. Why does menstruation occur?
30. How long should a period last?
31. How much blood is lost?
32. Are blood clots in the flow normal?
33. If the period comes early or is delayed, is anything wrong?
34. Is exercise okay during menstruation?
35. Can menstruation cause pimples or a bloated stomach?
36. Can you take anything to delay menstruation because of vacation, honeymoon, athletic meet, etc.?

37. What causes cramps?
38. Can a girl have sex during her period?
39. What causes discharge?
40. Is a white discharge normal?
41. Is there something wrong if there is excessive discharge?
42. How many eggs can a woman release?
43. Please explain Tampax and feminine napkins.
44. Why do girls get mad easily or cry easily when they have their periods?
45. What happens when a woman has a hysterectomy?
46. Please explain menopause.
47. Can a woman have sex after she's been through menopause?
48. Do males have cycles like women do?
49. Does a man go through a change of life also?

Sexual Intercourse and Behavior

50. Exactly how do you go about intercourse?
51. Do all girls bleed and have pain during their first intercourse?
52. How long should you continue intercourse before there has been ample time for fertilization, and pregnancy is assured?
53. What are the "safest" times for a girl to have sex?
54. Is the first intercourse painful for the boy?
55. Is sexual behavior instinctive? Do you automatically know how to have intercourse?
56. How often can you have sex?
57. Do older people still have intercourse?
58. How often does the average couple have sex?
59. Can too much sex do anything to you physically?
60. How many calories are used up during the average intercourse?
61. Explain orgasm in the male and the female, and why orgasm isn't always achieved.
62. Is orgasm in women just emotion?
63. Is intercourse fulfilling without orgasm, and if so, what else determines a fulfilling experience?
64. Why do some orgasms have greater feeling?
65. Does sex affect the mind?
66. Does a woman get pregnant every time she has intercourse?
67. What does it mean when a female is "in heat"?
68. At what age do kids first have sex (average)?
69. What is sterility?
70. If a man or woman is sterile, is it okay to have intercourse?
71. Is it okay to smoke after intercourse?
72. Please explain oral sex. What is fellatio? What is cunnilingus?
73. In oral sex, is there any harm in swallowing sperm or any other sexual secretions?
74. What is sodomy?
75. What is frigidity? What is impotence? What causes them?
76. How much does the girl really want you to do to her and how can you tell?
77. Can intercourse get to be habit forming?
78. How does a girl stop a boy when she doesn't want to go any further?
79. Why are men the aggressive ones and women the passive receivers?
80. Is there really a difference between clitoral and vaginal orgasms?

81. What causes sex drive? Is it different in the male and the female?

Pregnancy and Childbirth

82. How does a woman know she is going to have a baby? What are the physical and emotional symptoms?
83. What causes a miscarriage?
84. Can a pregnant woman have intercourse? Would anything happen to the baby?
85. Can a girl get pregnant and still be a virgin?
86. How does a woman's body know not to produce an egg every month during pregnancy?
87. If a pregnant woman has intercourse, couldn't an egg still be fertilized?
88. How is a baby formed from an egg?
89. What causes twins and triplets?
90. How can you predict the sex of an unborn child?
91. How can you increase your chances of having a girl/boy?
92. How can you tell whether a child will be mongoloid?
93. What types of problems would occur if the baby came out feet first?
94. What is natural childbirth? Is it painful?
95. What different kinds of anesthetic are used for childbirth? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
96. Why use drugs during labor? Do some perhaps cause dyslexia, etc.?
97. What effects do drugs, alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes have on your baby if you used them while you were pregnant?
98. When do breasts begin to produce milk?
99. Does a flat-chested woman have trouble producing milk?
100. Does a woman who has a baby by Caesarian section have difficulty with her later sex life or with having other children?
101. Why do pregnant women have cravings for different foods? Does this affect their child?
102. Can you tell if you're pregnant without going to a doctor?

Birth Control

103. What are the different methods of birth control, and how does each work? How do you use each?
104. What is the effectiveness of each method?
105. Are there any 100 percent sure ways of preventing pregnancy?
106. What is the best birth control method?
107. Where and how easily available are birth control devices?
108. How much do birth control devices cost?
109. What are the side-effects of birth control pills?
110. Can the pill affect ability to have children later?
111. Can the pill cause defects in children born later?
112. Is the morning-after pill on the market? How does it work? Are there any side effects?
113. Is it possible to avoid pregnancy by having intercourse only at certain times of the month?
114. Is there any time when you don't have to use anything?
115. What is a vasectomy? Does a vasectomy affect a man's ability to have sex?

116. How is abortion done?
117. What is the average price for an abortion? Do you need parental consent?
118. What's wrong with using saran wrap or cokes as contraceptives?
119. Does a guy ever have a "safe" period?
120. What is a hysterectomy? Is it a form of birth control?

Venereal Disease

121. What are the symptoms of gonorrhea? of syphilis?
122. How is VD cured?
123. Exactly how does someone get VD?
124. Can you get VD from a drinking glass or a toilet seat?
125. How do you get VD from kissing?
126. Can you get VD even if a condom is used?
127. Can you die from VD?
128. Please explain "clap," "drip," "dose," "infected."
129. Will VD affect the baby if a pregnant woman has it? Will it affect the baby if the father has it?
130. How can a girl tell if she's got VD? Isn't it easier to tell in a man?
131. What do VD sores look like?
132. What other diseases can you get from sex?
133. Do you have to get a shot of penicillin to cure VD, or can you use something you might have at home?
134. Can you be treated for VD without your parents knowing it?
135. How often do you get VD from intercourse?
136. Can you get VD from homosexual relations?

Masturbation

137. What is masturbation?
138. Why do people masturbate?
139. How frequently do males/females masturbate?
140. How many people masturbate?
141. Can masturbation cause a person to have an orgasm?
142. Is masturbation harmful? If so, how much is harmful, and what can it do to you?
143. Is there any harm in using a vibrator?
144. Can masturbation affect your later sex life?
145. If a boy masturbates, is he considered a homosexual?
146. What is a "hand job"?

Homosexuality

147. What causes a person to become homosexual?
148. Is homosexuality a physical condition, a mental condition, or what?
149. Is homosexuality a disease?
150. Exactly how do homosexuals get sexual pleasure?
151. Is it possible for someone to be male and female at the same time?
152. Are homosexuals always homosexuals?
153. What is a bisexual? a transsexual? a transvestite?
154. If a person has a lisp, does it mean they are homosexual?

Psychological, Emotional, and Moral Aspects

155. Why do some people have more sex desire than others?
156. Why does my heart seem to beat faster when I see someone I like?
157. Is there a basic difference between the way boys regard sex as opposed to the way girls regard it? If so, is it inborn?
158. What do boys think of virgins vs. girls who have had sex?
159. What effect does pornography have on children? teenagers? adults?
160. Why do guys constantly have to keep their egos up?
161. If boys don't mature as fast as girls, how come they are interested in sex so soon?
162. What is your opinion of premarital sex?
163. Is 16 too young for petting? sex?
164. What is considered acceptable sexual behavior in our society?
165. Please discuss the double standard.
166. What is wrong with two people using each other, if they both know that's what it is?
167. Why is sex considered "dirty"?

Legal Aspects

168. Is it illegal for minors to buy contraceptives in this state?
169. At what age and under what circumstances can two people legally have sex?
170. What are the laws and punishments related to premarital sex?
171. What is the new abortion law?
172. What are the rape laws? If a woman agrees to intercourse and then has second thoughts, can she sue the man?
173. What is statutory rape?
174. Can you charge your husband with rape?

Miscellaneous

175. How do drugs like alcohol, marijuana, and LSD affect sex?
176. What are the symptoms of breast cancer?
177. How do you know if you have cancer of the uterus? Do you have a doctor check?
178. What causes your sex life to be poor?
179. Is petting a part of sex?
180. Why do adolescents get acne?
181. Are some lubricants harmful?
182. Is it true that many farm boys have sex with animals?
183. How does each person get their masculinity/femininity?

Why Sex Education Belongs in the Home by Dr. Sol Gordon

Imagine that one day your child comes home and asks you, point-blank, what intercourse means. What do you say?

Well, there's always the avoidance reaction. "Go ask your father (mother)" or "We'll tell you when you're old enough to understand."

Of course, "Where did you get *that* from?" is a possibility.

Or—difficult as it may sound—you could sit down with your child and explain what intercourse is. This way you'll be the one who tells him—not the kid down the block.

But what would it be like if most parents were able to communicate openly with their sons and daughters about sexuality? We can answer that indirectly by looking at what has happened by *not* preparing children to deal with their own sexuality.

- In 1972 there were more than 800,000 pregnancies among teen-agers, most of them unwanted.
- The birthrate among teen-agers is skyrocketing.
- In 1972 about 300,000 teen-agers had abortions.
- Venereal diseases are epidemic among adolescents; VD is second only to the common cold as the most prevalent communicable disease among teen-agers.

Clearly, our society is failing to teach sexuality adequately and in a healthy way. One matter still under debate, however, is where this teaching can best be done. By professionals in the schools? Or by parents in the home?

My stand, "Keep sex education in the home," may sound like the battle cry of a reactionary prude rather than of a university professor. But in spite of my respect for what schools can accomplish, I believe that the best place to learn about sex is not in locker rooms, on street corners—not even in school—but in the home.

Many people agree with this not-very-revolutionary position. Why, then, is it so hard to implement?

In my opinion there are two basic causes: first, outmoded attitudes, which make parents reluctant to teach their children about sexuality; and, second, lack of information on how to do it even if they want to.

Later on in this article I will give some practical suggestions on the "how to" of this kind of teaching. First, however, let's knock down some of the foolish strawmen parents hide behind when they refuse to accept this responsibility.

One obstacle is that many parents refuse to face life as it really is in the twentieth century. They suffer from a Victorian hangover—holdover?—that limits their vision and cripples their ability to cope with the reality of modern sexual roles—their own and their children's. But even as adults refuse to admit that we live in a very stimulating world, their children are out seeking and discovering *new* sources of stimulation.

Tragically, these same parents may eventually be caught by surprise because of the very ignorance they have ensured. Witness the reactions of countless mothers and fathers when they discover that their daughter is pregnant or their son has VD. In one horrible, cataclysmic moment, their whole world changes, and the reality of their children's lives comes sharply into focus.

Young people, too, pay a high price when adults adopt an ostrich-like attitude. When adults tell scare stories about sex, or worse yet merely say, "Don't do it," young people are not being given legitimate warnings and persuasive advice. All too often, this "it can't happen to me" attitude results in a story with an unhappy ending.

It's also foolish and inconsistent for parents to pretend that, in sexual matters, "what you don't know won't hurt you." Why do we accept the notion that "the more you know the better off you are" in every area *except sex*? The fact is, correct information about sexuality tends to inhibit rather than stimulate irresponsible behavior.

Finally, at the heart of the matter is the fact that *many adults cannot deal with their own sexuality*. They are disturbed by their children's sexuality because they are disturbed by their own.

Why are so many adults afraid to say "penis," "vagina," "sexual intercourse," "ejaculate," "orgasm"? Why do they limit sex in conversation to coarse jests, boasting, and outright lies? Whatever the cause for their discomfort—and, as we have seen, the causes are complex—it seriously distorts parents' communication with their children.

Since many parents seem ill-equipped or even unable to deal with sexuality at home, why not pass along to the schools the job of sex education? In recent years, this has been tried in some communities, but today we have reason to doubt the effectiveness of these school programs.

One reason for skepticism is that current sex education programs are unevenly distributed among school systems, and vary widely in quality and comprehensiveness. Good schools will usually provide basic information about reproduction, sexual anatomy, and venereal disease as part of their regular curriculum. Schools with high morale and student trust may even go so far as to present an occasional symposium on sex, distribute literature, show films, or perhaps deal with sexism and male/female relationships. Meanwhile, the poorer schools—which have trouble even teaching reading—usually avoid the issue of sex in the curriculum and thereby perpetuate ignorance.

A second reason school programs fall short is that an important part of what we call sex education—the part that involves emotional values—can't be taught in any classroom. This broader education must emphasize the love, trust, and caring that belong in every meaningful relationship, values best learned through family relationships in the home.

In addition, sex education programs in the school are necessarily incomplete because they come too late. Most of the child's true sex education stems from his impression of parental attitudes during his early development. It's in full swing by the time he goes to school.

Therefore, while it's obviously desirable to strengthen existing school programs through improved teacher training, symposiums, and so forth, it's wrong to think that schools can handle the whole job of sex education. The best way to stop the tide of irresponsible sexual behavior, pregnancy, and venereal disease is to create a climate of acceptance and honesty about sex in the home. In other words, parents must become the effective teachers about sexuality their children deserve.

Everyone agrees that parents should be "open and frank" when they talk to their children about sex, but no one is willing to tell parents *how*. After centuries of silence and secrecy, parents today are suddenly asked to "liberate" themselves. How can this transformation be started? How carried out?

First, parents should recognize that before they can communicate freely with their children, they must be able to talk freely about sexuality with *each other* and to develop sensitivity to their own feelings.

Husbands and wives can start by asking themselves such questions as, "Am I satisfied with our sexual relations?" "Are we able to express the affection we feel for each other?" "How has our sex life changed since we were married?"

In my professional experience, I find that husbands and wives are very often "out of touch" with their own feelings. Such talks can make them aware of their own "selves," and more open to their partner's needs. By discovering what is pleasing to themselves—never mind what the books say!—they can understand, and eventually become more comfortable with, their own sexuality. They can come to recognize that orgasm and frequency of intercourse are not as important as a continuing, loving relationship between two people.

This seems an obvious truth. Yet our culture—in its advertisements, popular magazines, and novels, and on television—tends to define intercourse as the only "real" expression of love. Because of this emphasis, both husbands and wives often become anxious about their "performance in bed" and begin to judge their marriage almost solely in physical terms. It is no coincidence that the leading sex clinics forbid sexual intercourse in the first few days of treating impotence and frigidity. Husbands and wives are asked to rediscover other forms of physical affection—hugging, kissing, just plain touching—as sometimes the most pleasing ways of expressing affection.

At times, too, parents have simply forgotten that before they were parents they were lovers. Taking on the responsibility of parenthood shouldn't lessen one's sexuality or love for each other. Through these open talks, as each partner becomes aware and confident about his or her own sexual needs and desires, he will become not only better adjusted sexually but also better prepared to deal with the child's developing sexuality.

In addition to increasing their own sensitivity to sexual feelings, parents often need to brush up on some basic facts. For openers, accurate knowledge about masturbation, intercourse, birth control, and venereal disease is essential for parents who want to develop guidelines for children. Women, especially, must become more knowledgeable because, even in this era of liberation, many of them still labor under the misconception that they aren't supposed to know much about sex, which is something that is "done to them."

Lastly, parents must *talk* about sex. Those who are uncomfortable hearing or speaking sexual words can practice them—alone, with their spouse, or in conversations with a friend or trusted counselor—until they feel natural and comfortable. This is important because children are sensitive to the emotional value parents give to certain words and may pick up what their parents feel rather than what their parents say.

A couple came to me recently with a question concerning the education of their three-year-old daughter. "When," they asked, "is a child prepared to handle sex information?" I reflected a moment and asked, "Well, when were you first interested in sex?" Neither could remember exactly. "That," I answered, "means you were very, very young."

In effect, sex education begins when children are born, not when they start kindergarten, not when they reach puberty. Developing a healthy attitude toward one's sexuality should mean creating a climate of openness about physical expression, about one's body, and about displays of affection, as well as about more specific sexual matters.

Unfortunately, too many parents overreact to their children's early physical expression, thus giving the child the impression that his own sexuality is somehow "dirty." Here again, the problem is usually ignorance. For these parents the following guidelines should be helpful:

- Playing with one's genitals is a common and normal activity for children and should not be a reason for scolding, punishment, or milder forms of disapproval such as substituting a toy. The child *needs* to explore his body and should not be discouraged.
- Although most adults today know that masturbation doesn't cause acne, impotence, or insanity, as was once believed, there is still a great deal of unnecessary anxiety about it. A parent's reaction to his child's masturbation will probably be conditioned by attitudes toward the practice when he was growing up, but should still reflect his adult knowledge that it is normal.
- Nudity in the bath and bedroom is a healthy way to introduce sexual differences and sexuality. A child will let his parents know when his sense of modesty dictates privacy (by closing the door, asking to bathe alone, etc.). By the same token, adults have a right to their own privacy, and most children can accept that their parents want to be alone sometimes.
- When talking with children about sexual matters, parents should be receptive to the child's language but supply proper terms. Giving the child the correct names for parts and functions of the body is important in lending them dignity and naturalness.

- If a young child repeats an obscenity that he has heard in the street or from adults, parents should explain what it means without being afraid to use the word. This approach has several advantages. First, the child will know that he can't use the obscenity as a weapon against his parents. Second the child will realize that no question or topic that he may bring up will make them uncomfortable. Third, by explaining the obscenity with proper terminology, parents are treating the subject of sex with respect, instead of relegating it to the gutter.
- Children often come to believe that expressing physical affection is inappropriate because they rarely see adults *touch!* Consequently, many grow up without knowing how to express themselves physically. As teen-agers, such children tend to believe that touching another person is only a prelude to sexual intercourse, rather than a legitimate form of affection in itself. Obviously, then, parents shouldn't cut their children off from physical affection after infancy; the older child still needs this assurance of his parents' love and can accept it as a natural and meaningful way to express feelings.
- The time to discuss sex is whenever the child asks a question—not later—or when the topic comes up in a discussion.

But what about the child who has asked no questions—or the teen-ager who needs advice immediately? How can parents be frank with children if they've never talked with them about sex before?

Again, parents who have become comfortable with their own sexuality will find it easier to pass along information and values. But even if parents feel uncomfortable in such a situation, they should not avoid any opportunity to communicate with their youngsters about sex. The easy way is to hand them a good book on the subject. But remember: Genuine communication with adolescents is more important than merely passing along information.

If adults feel embarrassed, perhaps they can start by acknowledging this discomfort. Perhaps they can say something like: "It's not always easy for me to talk about sex, but there's no reason to be ashamed of sexual feelings or thoughts—everybody has them. I may have been brought up with different ideas about it, but it would still be good if we could both discuss sexuality."

- Many parents fear that presenting basic information is the same as giving young people permission to be promiscuous. My own belief is that, while for many good reasons teen-agers are not ready for sex, withholding information about sexuality, venereal disease, and contraception until young people are "ready" only increases the chance that they will make mistakes.

It is also true that there is no pat definition for sexual "readiness." Some people believe in abstinence from sex before marriage. Others would choose such criteria as emotional maturity, stability, and social responsibility as the factors that determine when a person is ready for sex. But no matter how we, as parents, define readiness, we cannot ignore the fact that many adolescents today are having intercourse before marriage. Therefore, even when parents feel sure that early sexual experience can cause guilt, anxiety, or other emotional problems for young people, at the same time they should not risk the trauma that can result from premarital pregnancy or venereal disease by denying children access to factual information about sexual behavior.

- Moral guidelines must be provided, in my opinion. Given the fact that many adolescents engage in sex without their parents' consent, adults can try to ensure that these sexual encounters are not disastrous. Standards of behavior are *good* for adolescents, as well as for adults. Many adolescents, left in a moral vacuum, want and need sensible guidelines from their parents.

Here are some "morals" I offer the young people I talk with:

- No one has the right to exploit another person's body, commercially or sexually.
- No one has the right to bring unwanted children into the world.
- No one has the right to spread venereal disease. If infected, get medical treatment *fast*.

As with other facets of experience, the best way to help your children develop healthy attitudes about sex is through example. If parents are honest and well informed, children will learn the value of knowing the facts. If they're generous with affection for the child and spouse, youngsters will themselves learn to be loving partners and parents. In effect, if parents are comfortable with their own sexuality, children will have an excellent opportunity to learn how to lead sexually healthy lives. And they will have learned how from the people who can teach them best—their parents in the home.

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Seminar Four:

Strategies for Parent/Adolescent Communication

Introduction

By the time children become adolescents, parents have spent a number of years telling them what to do or what not to do: wash your hands; eat your vegetables; don't hit your brother; make your bed; do your homework. But as children reach adolescence, simply telling them what to do doesn't really produce the desired effects. Now we hope for more than simple obedience. We want our children to become increasingly independent, and to make responsible decisions on their own when situations arise. We want them to develop what we call "good judgment"—an ability to make wise moral decisions for themselves. And, for adolescents, there is probably no area of decision making in which the stakes are as high as they are in the realm of sexual choices.

How, then, can we as parents have the kind of dialogue with our children that promotes their taking charge of their own decision making, yet assures that we have done our best to share our beliefs, values, and expectations with them? How can we encourage them to think things through for themselves, taking into account all the foreseeable consequences of any sexual behavior before they find their emotions stirred and their needs overpowering? This sort of communication is not of the make-your-bed, do-your-homework variety. It demands listening to their thoughts and feelings as well as sharing your own. It requires skills in asking clarifying questions, not accusatory ones. It means talking about mutual hopes, desires, and dreams, as well as fears and problems. It sometimes means saying, "I don't know" and "What do you think?" It means respectfully beginning to talk with a son or daughter as one adult to another, because the way parents interact with them has a great deal to do with the way they will see themselves, and therefore behave. This kind of communicating takes time and effort and love, but the payoffs for parents and children can be profoundly rewarding and life-enhancing for both.

This fourth seminar is designed to give parents a chance to practice some skills necessary for good communication and to share with each other some specific approaches. Participants will also receive some trigger materials that can serve as points of departure for serious discussion with their adolescents. Finally, participants will evaluate this seminar series and decide whether they wish to plan any future seminar meetings around topics of particular interest.

Objectives for Parents

Parents will be able to:

- privately clarify their current value positions regarding some key aspects of adolescent sexual behavior and the role of parents in sex education.
- consider some strategies for maintaining good overall communication with their adolescents, with some specific tips for helping adolescents make sexual behavior choices.
- sharpen their communication skills as they help each other think through approaches to talking with their adolescents about sexual decision making.
- decide if they wish to meet again to learn more about these or other issues of parenting.
- decide whether to make recommendations to local schools, churches, or other community agencies regarding needed sex education information, programs, or services for adolescents and parents.

Agenda

Suggested time (2 ½ hours)	**Activities**
5 minutes	1. Where I Stand Now: A Clarifying Questionnaire
45 minutes	2. Starting the Dialogue Cues for Parents Sharing Expectations: Life Lines Helping Adolescents Physically Express Affection
25 minutes	3. Strategies for Improving Communication On Keeping Communication Open Some Roadblocks to Good Communication Ways to Approach a "Crisis" Discussion
10 minutes	Break
40 minutes	4. Parents Helping Parents: Real Problem Solving
10 minutes	5. Of What Worth?
15 minutes	6. What Now?

1.
Where I Stand Now: A Clarifying Questionnaire

5 minutes

Over the past three sessions, participants have explored adolescent development and sexuality from a variety of perspectives. They have been considering the responsibilities of parents to help adolescents cope with the sexual questions, pressures, and choices they are experiencing at this time of their lives. It isn't easy to be certain what's right to say (or not say) to adolescents about sex. Each parent must first be clear on what he or she believes about the role of sexuality in human relationships. Then parents can decide the best ways to approach discussion of those values and expectations in their own families.

The following questionnaire is to be answered privately by each participant. The purpose is to clarify where the individual stands now on some of the critical issues relating to adolescent sexuality. It should take about five minutes to fill out. Then participants may tuck it away to share later with a spouse or friend or even directly with their adolescent. No group discussion is planned at this point, although the experience of deciding which statements best reflect their points of view will help prepare for subsequent activities in this seminar.

Where I Stand Now

A Clarifying Questionnaire

Circle the letter(s) you feel most nearly expresses your present attitudes toward the issue mentioned. If no choice expresses your thoughts, write your opinion after "other."

1. In my opinion, premarital intercourse
   a. is wrong under any circumstance; sex belongs in marriage.
   b. is okay if the couple is engaged and plans to marry.
   c. is okay provided each partner has some commitment and sense of caring and concern for the welfare of the other.
   d. is okay under any mutually agreed upon circumstance.
   e. is okay as long as they are responsible enough to use birth control.
   f. other _____
   _____

2. I believe birth control by adolescents
   a. is always wrong.
   b. should always be used if one is sexually active, unless a baby is wanted.
   c. other _____
   _____

3. If an unwanted adolescent pregnancy were to occur in my family, I believe
   a. the couple should marry and raise the baby on their own.
   b. the girl should have an abortion.
   c. the girl should have the baby and raise it alone.
   d. she or her parents should pay expenses.
   e. her parents should help raise the baby.
   f. his parents should help raise the baby.
   g. the baby should be put up for adoption.
   h. other _____
   _____

4. Sex education, in my opinion,
   a. should be the responsibility of parents and family.
   b. should be part of the school program.
   c. should be available in the community.
   d. belongs in the church's educational program.
   e. should not be taught.
   f. other _____

5. Regarding communication with my son or daughter about sex, I believe I should
   a. actively bring up sexual development, feelings, and behavior with my children, and encourage family discussion of sexual matters.
   b. wait for my adolescent to raise questions or indicate readiness to talk, then answer as best I can.
   c. make books and other information available.
   d. encourage my adolescent to talk to others who would be good counselors, but not discuss the matter with him or her in very great detail myself.
   e. not discuss sex with my adolescent at all; just let him or her know my beliefs by example.
   f. not discuss sex with my adolescent, but simply state my feelings about what's right and wrong and demand they abide by my rules as long as they live under my roof.
   g. other _____

2.
Starting the Dialogue

45 minutes

Many parents have already begun to talk with their adolescents about managing sexual decision making. But most parents find it a little tricky to know exactly when to broach the subject or how to have a give-and-take dialogue instead of a one-way lecture. In this portion of the seminar we will examine some cues that may indicate when a teenager is needing to talk with his or her parents about sexual matters. Then we will experiment with two possible "talk-starters" that can lead to a meaningful exchange of values between parent and adolescent.

Part 1: Cues for Parents

(10 minutes)

Ask participants to group themselves in small congenial groups of three to five for this series of activities. First, refer them to "Cues for Parents" on the next page. Give them a minute or two to look them over and comment as they wish. Then ask them quickly to brainstorm other cues and enter them on their sheets. It is noteworthy that young people may never come right out and ask parents specific questions that might be on their minds. (For example, how many questions from last week's take-home reading have participants' sons or daughters asked them directly? Probably not too many.) Parents must watch for more subtle cues that indicate a need to talk or to understand better what's going on in their growth toward sexual and social maturity.

Cues for Parents

Your son or daughter may need or want to talk with you about sexual matters if he or she:

- tells you third-person stories, maybe about "a friend at school who..."
- asks questions in the vein of "What would you do if I..."
- seems troubled or just wondering about something sexual he has read or heard or seen on TV.
- leaves sexual magazines or other clues around for you to find.
- asks you about your adolescent dating and courtship behaviors.
- has a close, physical touching relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Part 2: Sharing Expectations: Life Lines

15 minutes

Parents have many hopes and dreams for their children. Sometimes these wishes and expectations are spoken aloud, planned for, budgeted for, and discussed openly. Sometimes they are deeply felt but transmitted in subtle, even unspoken ways; perhaps they are never really communicated to their children at all. But all parents think about their children's futures.

This exercise gives parents an opportunity to put down on paper a hypothetical life line that they believe would be "good" for their son or daughter. Of course, there are many constructive paths young people could take in growing up, and this life line will represent only one path that seems desirable; but it can highlight those things parents want especially for their children, and can suggest a sequence that seems promising. Participants should take about five minutes to fill in the sheet.

Afterward, encourage participants to discuss their projected life lines for their children in their groups. Groups may want to consider the following:

- Do you think your children have thought about their lives in this way before? Have you and they ever talked about it?
- At this point, do you suspect that your child's vision and yours will be rather similar? quite different?
- How many of you entered parenthood during the adolescent years? Why or why not? Where do you think your child would enter it on the life line projected for him or her?
- Where on the life line would you have the following events begin: sexual intimacy, marriage, and living together. Where do you think your child might place these events?

Parents might use these sheets at home as a basis for dialogue with their sons or daughters. One good way to begin a discussion is to ask the child to fill out a blank life line before the parent shares his or her projection. Different images of the future can serve as fodder for discussion for some time. The life line provides both parents and children with a vehicle for communicating some of their deeply held values, expectations, and aspirations. After discussing the long-range view, they can explore together the importance of considering carefully how sexual intimacy should be handled prior to the time one is ready to be a parent.

Life Line

Fantasize a little!

Fill in below a life line for your son or daughter that represents some of the hopes, dreams, and expectations you have for this critical "growing up" decade and beyond. Jot down key life events that would add up to your vision of a desirable sequence of experiences that could help your child become an increasingly competent, confident, and satisfied person. You may want to include such things as: education, work, travel, parenthood, etc. at the approximate ages that make sense to you. Have your adolescent do a similar projection for himself or herself. Then share your visions of the future.

Age _____

16 _____

17 _____

18 _____

19 _____

20 _____

21 _____

22 _____

23 _____

24 _____

25 _____

35+ _____

50+ _____

Part 3: Levels of Physically Expressing Affection

20 minutes

Forming close relationships with persons of the opposite sex and working out ways to express affection appropriately are important parts of growing up in the late teen and young adult years. Adults sometimes call these first romantic episodes "puppy love"; but to an adolescent involved in a caring relationship with someone outside the family, a first-love relationship can be an extremely significant and affirming experience.

Many high school youngsters find themselves rather suddenly in relationships that they take very seriously. They often feel awkward or clumsy about expressing their feelings to their partner. The hormones start flowing, the physical and psychological yearnings become very powerful, and the need to do something is very urgent. At times like these, young people who have not really thought or talked about such feelings beforehand or who somewhat unexpectedly find themselves overwhelmed by the desire to express affection, can be in over their heads before they know it. Most adults can remember how difficult such moments can be, but they find it hard to talk in "nitty gritty" terms to their children about ways one might handle these feelings.

- Refer participants to the "Levels of Physically Expressing Affection" diagram.

Mr. Neil Hickey, the family and adolescent counselor who wrote the article on parent/child communication in Seminar Three, uses this diagram with adolescents to identify the steps in a progression toward deeper and deeper expression of love and affection in human relationships. He has found that it helps young people to think more clearly about the variety of behavioral responses they might agree to "hold the line at," to avoid losing control of their feelings and propelling themselves into intercourse with the resulting possibility of an unwanted pregnancy. He urges them to "put each kind of expression in its own time capsule and savor it as long as you can." He says, "There is no need to rush into any level of expression you are not *completely* prepared for, when each one has its own particular joy and feeling of closeness." Then the decision to have intercourse with a very special person can become a reasoned one that implies that a couple is either ready for parenthood or is responsibly taking precautions to assure that no pregnancy will result.

Mr. Hickey also tells young people to think about the stairsteps in another way. He points out that for most of us, out of all the people we will know in a lifetime, there may be hundreds with whom we would stand on the first two levels, exchanging kind words and fond touches. There are probably a good many we might hold hands with or even hug. But from there, the field narrows considerably. Most people reserve kisses for those relatively few special people for whom they have very special feelings. And in many people's lifetimes, there are only one or two people with whom they choose to climb to the top step. He suggests to young people that they think now about the deepest meaning of their personal ascent up the stairs, for today and for the future.

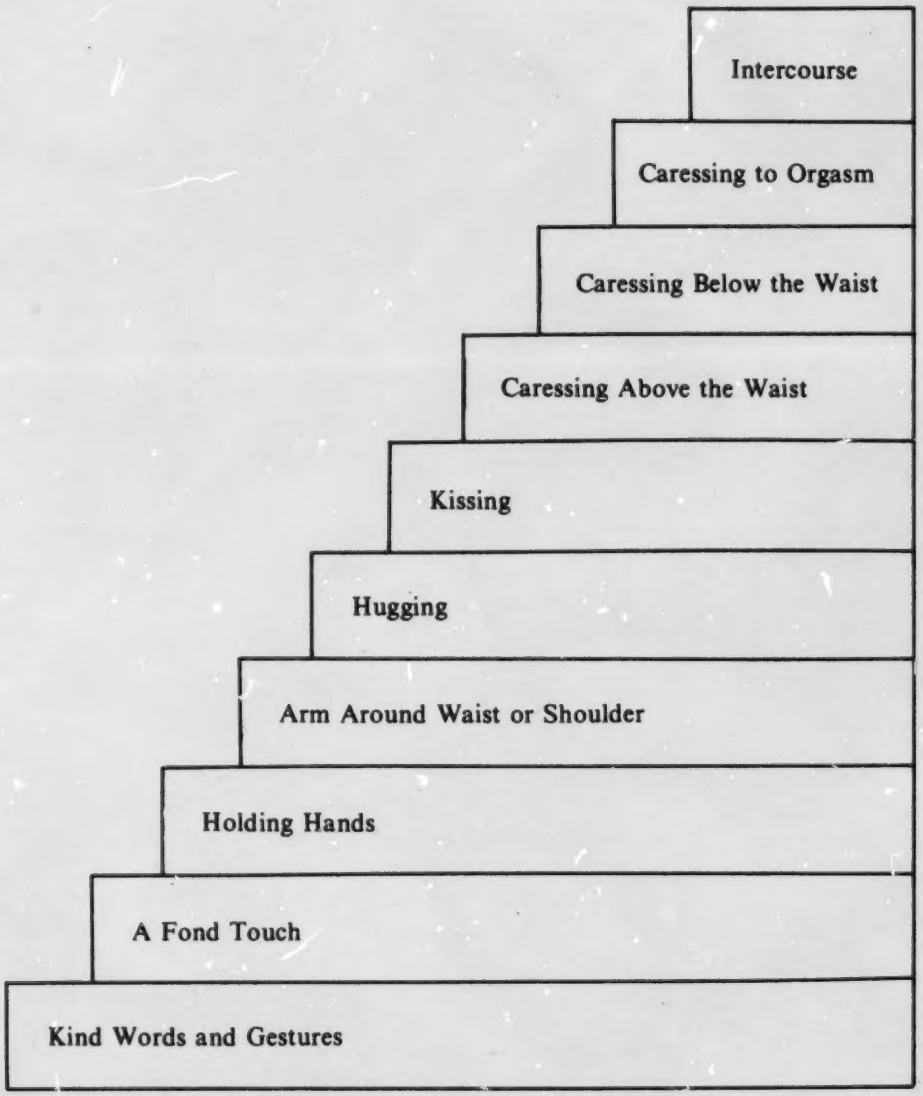
Other parents have shared this model with their sons and daughters and found that a very serious and helpful discussion resulted. Adolescents themselves have said that thinking through a whole range of intimate caring behaviors gives them a way of talking to their partners about an appropriate place to "level off." Thinking about the step you're really comfortable to stand on for a while can prevent an uncontrolled and unnecessary rush up the stairs. What do you think?

- Do you think it is a useful model?
- Would you share it with your child? If so, what would you say to him or her to get a dialogue going?
- What are some of the key value points you would make using this diagram?

For Further Consideration

For adults, intercourse may not be viewed as the highest pinnacle of physical expression of the spiritual-emotional union between a man and a woman in a loving relationship. It is placed at the top of this diagram because it is what most adolescents mean when they consider "going all the way" and it is the physical act that can result in a baby. After discussing the chart, some parents may wish to raise the additional question with mature adolescents: "Do you think intercourse is the ultimate expression of love between a woman and a man?"

Levels of Physically Expressing Affection



This stairstep diagram depicts the levels in a progression toward deeper and deeper expression of love and affection in human relationships. It is useful in helping people to think more clearly about the step on which they would be most comfortable in a given relationship. If a couple can agree to stay on one level and savor its special meaning, they will be more likely to avoid losing control of their feelings and propelling themselves into intercourse before they are ready for all the possible consequences of that behavior.

3.
Strategies for Improving Communication

25 minutes

The three pieces that follow present some recommendations for improving the communication between parents and adolescents. The suggestions are especially useful when the conversation centers on sensitive topics like sexuality.

- Refer participants to "On Keeping Communication Open." Allow about seven minutes for reading. Parents may discuss their reactions briefly in their small groups. Summarize this piece by reiterating the point in the last paragraph that assures parents that all these responses can be facilitative if used with care and balance. If the bulk of one's dialogue with one's son or daughter is judgmental or advice giving, it's probably not going to be very helpful to the child. By the same token, you cannot always be empathic or keep saying "let me see if I understand you" either. A judicious mix, heavier on the right side of the continuum but not neglecting the left side, is best. The exact balance point is up to you.
- Refer participants to "Some Roadblocks to Good Communication." After they have read it, allow about five minutes for discussion.
- Refer participants to "Ways to Approach a Crisis Discussion." After participants finish reading it, give them about five minutes to react and think of some experiences they have had that either bear out or contradict the usefulness of the recommendations.

Participants will be able to practice some of these techniques for improving communication in the next activity.

Many of these responses may sound familiar. In fact, these kinds of responses do occur commonly in everyday interaction with our family and friends. In most cases, friends and loved ones allow us much latitude in the communication process and no lasting harm is done. Consider, though, how these same responses could block the development of a close, warm, genuine, helping relationship. They may in fact communicate to the adolescent that his and her feelings are unimportant to you. She or he may feel "put down." Both the adolescent's self-esteem and opinion of you may suffer. This could lead to tension and anxiety in the family and, at worst, total alienation. Practicing the responses suggested in "On Keeping Communication Open" can help diminish the frequency of the kinds of responses that harm relationships.

On Keeping Communication Open*

As parents we are always responding to our adolescent's statements and behaviors. In the long run, we hope that our responses are helpful and supportive. It is easy to come down hard if we see behaviors or feelings expressed that are not completely to our liking, and there are of course times when that is probably important to do. But in general, coming down hard with advice or interpretation, before the adolescent has had the chance to examine his or her own behavior or feelings, closes off real communication between parent and child. Here is some food for thought about responding in ways that keep the lines of communication open.

Responses can be placed on a line, or continuum, from least to most helpful in encouraging a person to think through an issue or problem for himself or herself.

Least Helpful					**Most Helpful**
Advice or Evaluation	Analysis or Interpretation	Reassurance or Encouragement	Probing or Questioning	Summary or Clarification	Understanding or Reflection

Advice or Evaluation: Unless specifically asked for by the adolescent, this response is the least helpful in eliciting openness and communication. Advice implies what the child ought to do. The adolescent, therefore, may become defensive when he or she perceives that his or her behavior is being judged. Honesty and openness are thus hindered, and the adolescent may feel compelled to do the opposite, in order to feel "I'm my own person."

Examples:

"Instead of talking about going steady with him, you should be dating lots of guys."

"If I were you, I'd study more and socialize less."

Advice or Interpretation: This response goes beyond the adolescent's spoken words or evident behavior to speculation about why he or she is thinking or behaving in certain ways. This often makes the adolescent behave defensively or feel resentful because it implies that the parent knows more than the adolescent does about his or her life—a point of view most individuals reject.

*Adapted from *P.E.T. in Action*, Dr. Thomas Gordon, New York: Bantam Books, 1976.

Examples:

"Don't you see, you don't love her. You are only going out with her because we don't want you to; you're rebelling against our authority."

"When you wore that dress to school today you were looking for a reaction and thinking everyone would give you lots of attention."

Reasssurance or Encouragement: This response tries to reduce anxiety or intense feelings. These responses appear positive on the surface but can be felt in very negative ways. But seemingly supportive statements such as "you can if you'll try" can cause a person to feel you aren't really listening or you don't understand. Sometimes encouraging responses imply to the adolescent that he or she does not need to feel a certain way. This is enormously frustrating; the person feels that his or her feelings aren't respected or accepted.

Examples:

"That's not very serious; everyone feels like that on occasion."

"I'm sure that everything will turn out okay for you."

Probing or Questioning: This response seeks further information or discussion. It implies that the adolescent should or might profitably develop a point more fully. Questions that are open-ended—that ask the adolescent to elaborate a thought or feeling or to provide more information—are better than questions that can be answered with just a "yes" or "no" or a nod of the head.

Examples:

"Do you know the 'facts of life'?" (closed)

"How do the other kids at school feel about drinking at the dances?" (open)

"When she treated you that way, did you feel she thought you had hurt her in some way?" (open, person-centered)

"What do you think about the idea of living together before marriage?" (open but not person-centered)

Avoid asking too many questions; rather, go to the assumption behind the question, and use reflection or make a statement.

Summary or Clarification: This response indicates the desire to understand correctly what the adolescent is actually saying or to identify the most significant ideas or feelings he or she is expressing. There is an implied eagerness to check out what has been heard in order to be "with" the person.

Examples:

"Let me see if I'm following you; you're thinking that cheating and not getting caught is okay."

"I think you're telling me that you have felt this way many times before, not just this once."

"As I understand what you're saying, you believe..."

Understanding or Reflection: This is a creative, empathic response that lets an adolescent know that his or her feelings are being "read," that he or she is understood. It also requires the most work on your part: a genuine effort to hear without judging. It reflects back to the adolescent a response that communicates that you accurately understand how the world appears to him or her.

Examples:

"You are feeling angry with Harold."

"I understand how you could be confused right now."

"You don't feel like being part of the group."

"I remember feeling that very same way when..."

At the proper time and place, all of the above responses can be facilitative, but research shows that probing, clarifying, and reflecting responses are the most effective in establishing a helping relationship and eliciting self-understanding and problem solving. These responses can help the adolescent reveal some concerns hidden to himself or herself in the process of thinking things through aloud with you. Responses from a caring adult that facilitate the child's self-awareness hasten the development of his or her moral decision-making skills.

Some Roadblocks to Good Communication *

Suppose you were talking with your daughter and she said, with strong feeling, "I'm sick and tired of being hassled." How would you respond?

Some typical responses are listed below.

1.	*Threatening*	"Feeling like that will get you in trouble."
2.	*Lecturing*	"You should be glad it's not worse."
3.	*Moralizing*	"You ought to be trying harder."
4.	*Blaming*	"Maybe you're just getting what you deserve."
5.	*Advising*	"If I were you, I'd do something about it."
6.	*Sympathizing*	"It's too bad you're always getting picked on."
7.	*Questioning*	"Who's hassling you?"
8.	*Kidding*	"You don't look like you're being hassled."
9.	*Sarcastic*	"Why would anyone want to hassle a nice girl like you?"
10.	*Praising*	"They're just hassling you because they're jealous."
11.	*Name-calling*	"Don't be such a baby."
12.	*Ordering or Commanding*	"Don't give me any of that garbage!"
13.	*Criticizing*	"Feeling like that isn't going to get you anywhere."
14.	*Analyzing*	"You just have a persecution complex."
15.	*Diverting*	"Oh, why don't you just have a cold drink and forget it?"
16.	*Rejecting*	"I can't do anything about it."
17.	*Counterattack*	"Well, how many people have you hassled?"
18.	*Placating*	"Well, everybody gets hassled at some time in their life."
19.	*Over-identifying*	"I know what you mean, I get hassled all the time, too."
20.	*Shifting Focus*	"What does your teacher think about that?"
21.	*Ignoring*	(No response is a response.)

*Adapted from *P.E.T. in Action*, Dr. Thomas Gordon, New York: Bantam Books, 1976.

Ways to Approach a "Crisis" Discussion*

Suppose your son or daughter has done something upsetting. How can you talk about it in a way that minimizes the possibility of destructive emotional outbursts that thwart helpful communication and problem solving? These suggestions are offered to help you move the crisis discussion in constructive directions.

Focus your contributions to the dialogue on:

- the behavior rather than the person.
- facts, not appearances or guesses.
- description rather than judgment.
- the "here and now" rather than the "there and then."
- the needs of the person in trouble, not your own.
- what is said rather than why it is said.
- exploration of different alternatives rather than immediate closure on "the answer."
- information limited to an amount that the person can use, rather than the full quota you have and might like to give.
- mutual problem solving rather than one-way advice giving and decision making.

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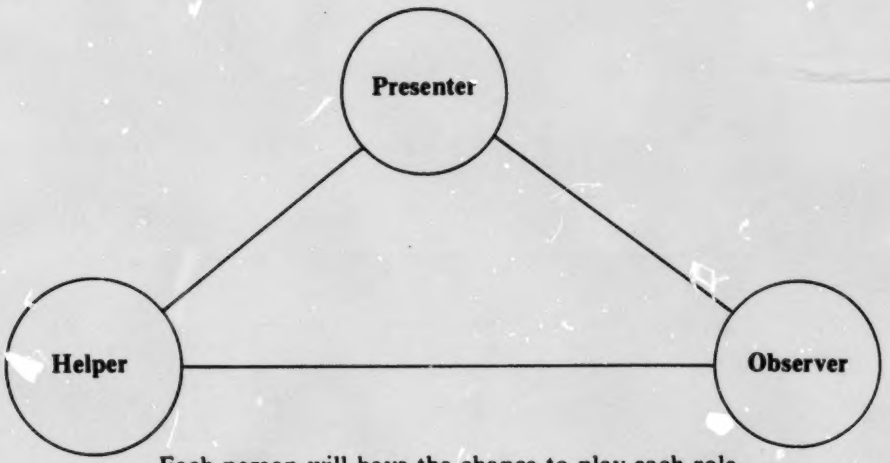
*Ideas adapted from D.W. Johnson, *Reaching Out*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972 (pp. 16-17).

4.
Parents Helping Parents: Real Problem Solving

40 minutes

This activity gives participants opportunities to (1) explore communication problems with their adolescent children; (2) practice applying some of the preceding strategies for effective communication; and (3) observe dialogue between two people and give feedback on the communication process.

Ask participants to form new groups of three. Draw the following diagram on the board.



Each person will have the chance to play each role.

The *presenter* briefly shares a problem with the helper. The problem can be any aspect of parenting adolescents that the presenter finds bothersome. It should be describable in just a few sentences. For example, "My son and I just can't seem to talk for more than a few minutes before I get irritated and angry at his don't-give-a-hoot' attitude. He just doesn't seem to care about his appearance, his studies, his obligations to help around the house, and I find myself expressing disapproval that I know drives him away. I just don't know how to break out of the pattern we have fallen into."

The *helper* listens to the presenter and tries to help him or her clarify the problem and think of some alternatives for solving it. The helper should try to apply some of the suggestions for helpful responses discussed in the last activity. Most of all, he or she should try to be an empathic listener and to ask clarifying questions.

The *observer* should watch, listen, take a few notes on the conversation, and afterward, focus his or her feedback on the helper. Refer to any of the strategies for good communication that were applied in the dialogue. Questions to help focus the observation are:

- How did the helper put the presenter at ease?
- What were the most helpful responses in terms of the presenter's being able to analyze the situation further?
- Which response from the helper seemed to be the least helpful to the presenter? (Check this out with the presenter.)
- Was there a point when the presenter's insight into what he or she might do to resolve the problem changed?

Give all participants about five minutes to think of a problem they would like to raise.

Ask each triad to decide who will take what role for the first round. The presenter should explain the problem briefly to the helper; the observer should observe. The conversation should go on for about five minutes. (Time this carefully so that each person has equal time in each role.)

Call time and ask the observer to give feedback to helper. Allow three to five minutes for this part.

Call time. Have participants rotate roles and start the process again. (10 minutes)

Rotate roles for the third time and complete the process. (10 minutes)

Conclude this activity by noting the following points:

- Considering our own skills and styles of response can help us manage our own behavior better in dialogue with our adolescents.
- Communicating in ways that open the other person up and cause him or her to raise and think things through for himself or herself is ultimately more helpful than the best-intentioned advice offered immediately.
- As parents talking with adolescents it can be hard not to slip into a preaching/demanding mode. But with effort and practice it is possible to become a better listener; to communicate that you accept the child even when you don't accept the behavior; and to find ways to elicit self-assessment and personal decision making from him or her.

5.
Of What Worth?

10 minutes

This seminar ends the series of four core sessions. Some parents may choose to meet again, but this may be the last session all will attend. To aid in improving programs of this kind, ask participants to take about five minutes to fill out the evaluation sheet. They may sign their names if they wish.

6.
What Now?

15 minutes

Participants may wish to share informally some of the things they wrote on their evaluations for a minute or two. Then ask specifically whether there are topics about adolescents and sexuality, sex education, or parenting that they would like to explore further. List any suggestions on the board. Then present the Suggestions for Additional Seminars that follow in this book. The group might also decide on the basis of their experiences so far that they wish to make some recommendations to local schools, churches, or other community agencies regarding sex education programs or services for adolescents and their parents.

If there seems to be sufficient interest in any of the issues raised, or a desire to set up forums for broader community participation, a planning committee should be formed and tentative target dates set.

Experience with other parent groups indicates that whether or not more formal sessions are deemed necessary or desirable, some parents enjoy assembling again informally after a month or two has passed and they have had the opportunity to try some of the suggestions. After they do some talking with their adolescents about managing their sexuality and making good decisions, it is often helpful to discuss how things went, how the children reacted, and what strategies seemed to be most helpful in opening up good dialogue about these issues. If the group chooses to do this, a date, time, and place should be set now.

Whatever next steps are decided upon by the participants, it is hoped that these four core seminars have been useful. They were intended to raise parents' awareness of the serious consequences of allowing adolescents to learn about sex the hard way, and to give parents information as well as confidence in their own abilities to communicate with their children about the significance of the decisions made in this vital aspect of human relationships.

Seminar Evaluation Sheet

1. The single most helpful part of the seminar series was _____

_____

2. The least useful part for me was _____

_____

3. I was most deeply touched by _____

_____

4. I was most angry or irritated when _____

_____

5. The main new things I learned were _____

_____

6. My thinking changed most with regard to _____

_____

7. I feel I need to know more about _____

_____

8. As a group, I feel we (were, were not) able to establish mutually helpful contacts and relationships with each other that can go beyond the conclusions of these seminars. I think this is primarily due to _____

_____

9. I think other parents (should, should not) sign up for these seminars because

_____

10. As a direct result of my participation in these seminars, I plan to _____

_____

11. If you were to plan similar seminars, I suggest that you _____

_____

12. I'd just like to add in closing _____

_____

Please return this evaluation sheet to the seminar leader or send it directly to: Family and Community Health Through Caregiving, Education Development Center, 55 Chapel St., Newton MA, 02160.

Optional Seminars

1.
Adolescent Pregnancies: Real Choices Made

One out of six girls who are sexually active "get caught" each year—that is, she gets pregnant. What does that statistic mean in human terms? You have already heard the stories of Cheryl and Robert in Seminar One.

In this seminar you will hear other young people tell how the pregnancy happened and what the outcomes were; you will also listen to a mother's account of discovering that her 15-year-old was pregnant.

These vignettes are intended to trigger discussions about unplanned pregnancies and the choices made by different individuals to resolve the situation. No attempt has been made to present all possible resolutions; rather, each case represents one person's decision and reasons for making that choice. We are not advocating any one alternative as being "right" or "better"; rather, we are advocating open and honest discussion of the many complex issues surrounding this emotionally-charged and occasionally controversial subject.

This set of materials contains five separate issues for mini-seminars; the group can choose any combination, or do all parts. The choices include:

1. *Mrs. Nie*, whose daughter became pregnant at 15. Mrs. Nie is helping her daughter raise the child at home.
2. *Dana, Deana*, and *Mary Beth*, three adolescents who became pregnant at 16, 13, and 15, respectively, and have chosen to raise their children as single parents.
3. *Carla*, who became pregnant at 16 and chose to give her child up for adoption.
4. *Linda and Ron*, who married upon finding out that Linda, 16, was pregnant.
5. *Bruce, Anthony*, and *Robert*, three adolescent males who have impregnated young women.

This seminar would be useful for parents, whether or not their children are sexually active, in order to understand better how adolescents think about sex and how "the boy or girl next door" can get into a situation for which there is no easy, painless resolution. With better insight into how adolescents get caught by unplanned pregnancies, parents and other concerned adults can perhaps be better able to help other young people avoid them.

Mrs. Nie.

Mrs. Nie's daughter became pregnant at 15. Now, two years later, she is supporting both her daughter and grandson. In this tape she tells how she and her family have adjusted to the birth of her daughter's baby, describes her feelings about what occurred, and talks about her hopes for the future.

Listen to the tape; group members may follow in their transcripts as they listen. Then allow time for discussion of what has been heard, using the questions below.

Group members will be able to compare the way Mrs. Nie felt about her situation with the way they might feel and act in a similar situation.

Mrs. Nie: Questions to Consider

What do you think of the way Mrs. Nie dealt with the news of her daughter's pregnancy? What other real choices did she have?

How do you feel about the way she handled the issue of Elizabeth's boyfriend? Would you have forbidden him to come to the house?

How do you react to her deciding not to tell her former husband about Elizabeth's pregnancy?

What kind of a future do you foresee for Elizabeth and her baby?

What reaction do you think is usual for a parent who suddenly learns that his or her child must contend with an unwanted pregnancy—guilt, shame, self-incrimination, joy, shock, fear, depression, rage, hurt...? How do you think you would react? How can parents get help in dealing with their feelings at such a time?

Mrs. Nie

Mrs. Nie's daughter became pregnant at 15. Now, two years later, she is supporting both her daughter and her grandson. In this tape she tells how she and her family adjusted to the birth of her daughter's baby, describes her feelings about what occurred, and talks about her hopes for the future.

I have seven children, four sons and three daughters. Elizabeth is my sixth child. She is now 18. At the time of her pregnancy she was only 15, delivered at 15 as well. She was just young. She was only in the ninth grade and didn't tell me about it, and I never dreamed that she was pregnant. I was completely shocked when she came to me and told me, and that was when she was six months. I just couldn't believe it. I never imagined anything like that. So when she told me the first thing that I said to her was, "Is it John's child?" who was her boyfriend. But she had broken up with him, and I had just thought it was kid stuff. She said yes. And I said, "Well, I don't know what we're going to do, but one thing you're not going to do is get married. You're 15 years old, and it's out of the question." She said that was all right, she didn't want to marry him anyway. And he was in the service and he was in Germany. And I thought to myself, "Good, let him stay in Germany and we'll solve this." And then I said, "Whatever we do, we'll do it together and don't worry."

She said at first she didn't believe it and just thought it would go away, I guess. And she was just plain frightened. She just didn't know what words to use, I guess. I said, "What could you possibly be frightened of?" She said, "I don't know, now I don't know," but then she said, "I was just too frightened." She hadn't even told the boy who was the father of the child. She hadn't told her sisters, or brothers, or anybody.

I asked her if she wanted an abortion, if she wanted to give up the child. She said abortion was out of the question. And we are Catholic and I am opposed to abortion, I hate the thought of it. I wouldn't have one myself. Then I asked her about giving up the baby and she said, "No way, absolutely no way," and I said, "You better give this a lot of thought because you're 15 and that baby is going to be with you for maybe 18, 19 years, and it's going to be your responsibility, you have to do everything for him or her." She said that's what she wanted to do, so then we proceeded from there. We took her to a doctor, took her to the obstetrician-gynecologist, and he confirmed the pregnancy and said she would have her baby in December; this was like Labor Day weekend.

The working boys went out and bought furniture for him, and I was taking her to the doctor, and my daughter who is married was saying, "Well, I'll babysit when she has to go to school." And that's the way it is. Everybody just dug in. Even her younger sister who was 14 then. I said, "How would you have felt how do you feel about Liz bringing home a baby?" She said, "Beautiful, we'll have another baby in the house." There was no objection, there was no talk about, "Oh, gee, why did she do this?" or anything. Nothing. Everybody just dug in and helped wherever they could help.

The one that took it the hardest was my mother. When I went over to tell her, she just cried and cried and she said, "Don't tell anybody." And I said, "Mama, it's not going to go away. This is a baby and he's going to arrive one of these days and very shortly." "Well, you don't have to tell anybody until he gets here." But now she's his biggest champion. Now she just loves him, loves him.

Then my oldest son went to visit his father and told him. We were separated then, we're divorced now. And I really was sort of afraid of, not afraid of what he'd do but what he might say, and that he might call the house, that he might upset her or something like that. He was pretty good about it really. He called up and said, "Don't you think you better make him support the baby?" and all that. And I said, "No, I don't want him involved at all, really," because I just felt if he supported the baby, there would be this thing about visiting him and I was really afraid that Liz might get caught up in the romance of, "Oh, he's the father of my baby, we're gonna get

married," and I just didn't want to hear that, not at that age. I felt by the time he got home from Germany the baby would be two years old, and Liz would be 18. Then, if she still wanted to take up with him or see him. He isn't a bad kid or anything like that, and I certainly didn't blame him for getting my daughter pregnant. That was not the thing at all. It was just that I felt at 15 she would be in love with love and say, oh, you know, "My baby should have a father and a name," and all that stuff. And that they would want to get married, and I just couldn't see it. I thought it would be just two mistakes instead of one, if you can call a baby a mistake, and I don't really.

She delivered her child in December. The baby weighed 6.7, very normal, healthy baby, beautiful little boy. And we just brought him home and by then it was *our* baby. At home I had five children and everybody was really looking forward to him, his birth. We fixed up a room for him, did the whole room over. One of the boys went out and bought a new crib. We had everything for him. Her friends were pretty cute about that. They had a baby shower for her and two or three of them crocheted things and knit things. They made afghans for the baby and cute things like that. They were really good, they used to come to the house before she was pregnant or before I knew she was pregnant, but the minute they found out she was pregnant, they were coming in droves. As a matter of fact, it got so that I thought they were sort of like curiosity seekers for a while. I said, "Liz, this is a little silly." But it dwindled down again, and now just her close friends come.

She didn't go back to school until after her six weeks checkup; this is the policy, they wouldn't allow her to. So after her six weeks checkup, she went back. The school was very good, they put her on—they call it a work-study program, because it is actually set up for kids who have to work half-a-day or something. So they put her on this program where they got all her courses in the morning and she left school half-past eleven, went home and took care of Matthew. So, every morning we drove him to the babysitter and then she went off to school. After school at 11:30, she went back to the babysitter, picked him up, and pushed him home in his baby carriage. And that's gone on now for three years, her sophomore year, her junior year, and now she's a senior.

She hasn't had the giddy times that the average high school kid has. I don't know, she just naturally matured more quickly and now she *has* to come home, she *has* to do the laundry, she *had* to make the formulas and change diapers, and all the things that the average 15-year-old doesn't have to do. She goes out with her friends. I don't think she got asked out as much. She has not dated much since she's had the baby. She has dated, though I don't think as much as, for instance, my other daughter did when she was in high school. But she goes out, has gone out a lot with her girlfriends to dances and to things like that, and has had a good time.

But she's adjusted. She's a beautiful mother and of course the aunts and uncles are crazy about him. I'm crazy about him, and we haven't tried to spoil her either. As I said, we're not built-in babysitters and if he has a cold or the sniffles or something, and she has plans for the night, I say, "Liz, you should stay in. It's your problem. I'm here, fine, and I'll go out and I'll buy the medicine for him and all that, but it's *your* obligation to spoon it to him." We haven't spoiled her, but we've provided well for him and for her.

I think she wrote and told the father of the baby or I don't know who wrote and told him, but somebody wrote and told him. And he came home at Christmas time when the baby was only about two weeks old and I wouldn't let him in the house. I just was very staunch about it; I said, "No." I just really felt that if I could keep them apart when she was at this very vulnerable age, that time would be on my side. And now he's back and I say she's 18. I couldn't keep them apart if I wanted to.

I think she's happy that we've decided to let John come to the house and take her out and see the baby, and he calls him Daddy and all that. I think it has pleased her. I've asked her now that she is seeing John and she said, "Well, we do want to get married." I just said to her, "Well, just don't settle for less than you have. Be

patient. It doesn't matter that you have to wait another year because you have a child. As I say, if you haven't been married and he's two years old, what difference does it make if you're not married until he's three. Wait. Save your money, plan. Marriage is a big step." As I say, just because she has a baby, I don't think she has to get married tomorrow.

And really our life isn't any different than anybody else's. People say to me, "Does he call you Mama?" I say, "No, he calls me Nana. I *am* his nana. I'm *not* his mama." And he calls her mama, he calls me nana, and he calls the others auntie and uncle and that's what we are. We have never pulled any punches about it. People say, "Whose baby is it?" "It's Lizzie's baby." "Oh, I didn't know Lizzie was married." "She isn't married." Just as simple as that.

If I had even considered this a few years ago, or said, "Oh, what if one of my daughters ever gets pregnant, what do I do?" I don't think I would have known what I would do, but when it happened, you just didn't have time to think about it, you just had to dig in. The first thought that we had was get her to a doctor. I said, "My God, she's six months and she hasn't seen a doctor and she's only 15 years old."

Oh, I did a lot of crying at first, when I first found out, I have to admit. I would cry myself to sleep nights thinking, oh God love her, how is she going to do this? How is she going to take care of a child, 15-years-old? And what are we going to do? And it just sort of fell right into place. And I have always thought, and I still think, if money is your biggest problem, you're pretty lucky, really. And I thought that was going to be a big deal and it isn't. It hasn't been. And I think she'll work it out. I really do.

Dana, Deana, and Mary Beth

On tape, each of these young women tells how she became pregnant and chose to keep her child and raise it as a single parent. Although each had different and deeply personal experiences, they all have certain elements in common; they each talk about "wishing it away," or forgetting about it, or hoping that somehow, miraculously, it would disappear. Each expresses shock and dismay upon hearing the confirmation of the pregnancy tests, as if unaware that pregnancy was a possible consequence of sexual relations.

Each girl was young—Dana, 16, Deana, 13, and Mary Beth, 15—at the time she became pregnant.

Each describes the difficult time she had telling her parents about the pregnancy, and talks about how she feels about the young man who fathered this child—what his role is and what she might like it to be. Each also talks about how her life has changed since the birth of her child—how her friends have reacted, and what image she has of her own and her baby's future. Each girl makes a point of separating marriage and motherhood in discussing her life.

Listen to the tapes; group members may follow their transcripts on pages115-117 as they listen. Then allow time for discussion, using the questions that follow the transcripts. The questions have been grouped under headings that help the leader to identify the key issue of each selection.

Dana: Questions to Consider

Separateness of Marriage and Motherhood

Why didn't Dana get married? Do you think she had a choice?

What is Dana's view of marriage? How does she view the role of the father? Why do you think she is now pressing paternity charges?

What do you think of her reasons for separating marriage and motherhood? Do you agree or disagree?

Family Reaction

Dana said, "Basically, my parents thought I was cheap." She also said, "They really didn't have time to accept the fact that I was pregnant, much less that I had a baby."

Do you think her description of her parents' feelings is accurate?

What choices did her parents have in deciding the outcome of this crisis?

How did her sisters react? How did they advise her? How did they support her?

Deana: Questions to Consider

Dealing with Reality

What was Deana's reaction to the news of her pregnancy?

Why do you think she felt a sense of unrealness?

How common do you think her reactions would be among young girls in similar situations?

Mother's Reaction

How did Deana's mother handle the situation of her daughter's pregnancy?

What were her other alternatives?

Do you agree or disagree with her choices?

Lifestyle Change

How has the baby changed Deana's life?

What are her feelings about marriage? How do you think this affects the child?

Mary Beth: Questions to Consider

Birth Control

Why did Mary Beth not use any birth control?

Do you think other teenagers feel the way she did?

Single Parenthood

"My biggest fear was that I wouldn't be able to raise him by myself...still the biggest one." Why do you think Mary Beth has this fear?

How did Mary Beth's boyfriend react to the news of her pregnancy? Why do you think he reacted this way?

What do you think Mary Beth looks for in the father of the baby? in a future husband?

Life Changes since the Birth of the Baby

How did Mary Beth's parents react to the news of her pregnancy? Why do you think they reacted in this way? Why do you think Mary Beth thinks her mother "didn't care because she wanted me to give it up."

How do you think her mother's attitude has changed? Why do you think it's changed?

How has her relationship to her friends changed?

How do you think Mary Beth thinks she has changed?

Dana

Dana, now 17, was pregnant at 16. She and her young daughter now live with Dana's sisters.

My name is Dana. I'm 17 years old. I'm not married. I got pregnant when I was 16. When I first thought I was pregnant, I was pretty scared. I didn't know what to do. So I told my sister, and she told my other sister and my other sister took me to the doctor. And up until the time I was three months pregnant, he told me I wasn't pregnant. So I just forgot about it.

And then my mother started noticing that I wasn't having a period. So she asked me about it. And I said, "You know, there's no way I can be pregnant, because the doctor told me I wasn't." So she takes me to the doctor, and he said, "You're pregnant." Then we went to another doctor and got all the doctor checkups and everything. My parents were for me giving the baby up for adoption. So to please them I said, "Okay, I'll think about it. I'll really do it, think about it." So I went on and it was really getting rough because they knew that I was just getting closer and closer, and I had two months to go to think about what to do about it, whether to give the baby up for adoption, or to keep her. And finally I decided to keep her.

My parents didn't know about the father; they didn't know anything about him. They didn't know I was dating him, nothing. At first, when I first found out I was pregnant, I called him up and I told him. And I hadn't seen him for five months. And he said, "Look, there's no way it's mine. It's just not." At first, he really didn't even believe I was pregnant. He just thought I was pulling one off on him I guess. And now it just depends on what kind of mood he's in, whether the baby's his or not. So I've filed a paternity case through welfare and they're going to handle that for child support. I do feel that's part of his responsibility.

So I didn't get married. I decided that just wasn't cool. I still had school to finish, and I had my career to get together, and I had to raise Amy, my daughter. And that was just too much along with being married and cooking dinner every night for my husband.

I lived with my parents off and on after I found out I was pregnant. The rest of the time I stayed with my sisters. Now I'm living with my sisters, and financially, they are, my sisters are supporting my daughter and I until I can finish school and get a job, and all that kind of neat stuff.

As for the way you feel about yourself, I think that totally depends on the people around you. You know, the way you are treated, and that kind of thing, and how it's accepted. My parents, when I found out I was pregnant, I was, basically my parents thought I was cheap, and they made no beefs about saying so. Not to my face, of course. Behind my back. But everything was said, I found out. For a couple of months after I had my daughter, I wasn't allowed in my parents' home. Just for the sheer fact that I had a baby. They didn't really have time to accept the idea that I was pregnant, much less that I had a baby. Then I go over to my sisters' house and they'd say, "Look, don't let them make you feel cheap. People do make mistakes." And then that kind of set me on the right track. But at first I think if any girl, teenager, gets pregnant, no matter what, I think they're really going to feel cheap. At first. Because that's basically the way society puts it, you know?

Deana

Deana is 17 and was pregnant at 13. She lives at home with her mother and her three-year-old son.

My name is Deana and I got pregnant when I was 13 years old. I was in the eighth grade. You know, when you're 13, you're not ready for anything; you're really little, at least I was. And I really didn't realize that I was pregnant. It was just like a dream, you know, it would go away tomorrow and that went on for seven months.

I could feel something kicking inside of me, and turning over. And I knew it wasn't just gas. And

I was gaining a little weight. But I didn't show until probably the last month I was pregnant. Not very much.

My mother finally realized that I hadn't had my period. So she goes, "Could you be pregnant?" and I go, "Yeah." She took it very well. She knew I had enough problems trying to decide what I wanted to do for myself. So she just said, "Whatever you want to do, I'll help you."

I told the father of the baby that I thought I was pregnant. He said, "Well, we can get married if you are." My mother and I and the father of the baby discussed getting married and she suggested we just live together at my mom's house and wait a couple of years, so I could get out of high school at least. So I could get educated, and then see if we wanted to get married. Well, that didn't work and we broke up about a year ago. But the father still sees the baby, Sean, about once a week, and takes him places. And we still go do stuff, but it's not a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship.

None of my friends knew I was pregnant. I was like 7½ to 8 months pregnant and I was still in my little gym uniform doing exercises, playing soccer and whatever we were playing. One day the counselor called me in and she says, "We know you're pregnant, so you can't come to school here anymore." And this really upset me, so I went home and told my mother that and she goes, "Well, that's fine. What are you going to do?"

About a week later, we finally got to talk to this counselor, and she told us about teen mothers and I started attending teen mothers' school, which was a big relief to me because I could finish my education, which I really wanted to do.

I still have my old friends, but I don't see them as often, because they can do whatever they want whenever they want, go out and have a good time. Everybody that I knew still talked to me but they weren't really as friendly. Used to be, "You want to go to a party tonight," or something, and they didn't do that. They kind of gave me the brush-off. But thankfully I had some friends from the teen mothers' school. I met a lot of girls that were in the same situation that I was, and that really helped me.

I'd like to get through school, and find out what I want to do with my life, before I commit it to somebody else. Maybe in the future I might. And my mom is supporting me and my son until I get out of school, get on my own feet, or whatever. I still live at home.

I really don't think my son Sean is hurting right now. 'Cause his dad comes over once a week and takes him someplace and sometimes we go together and have a good time. He's got, like I have five sisters and one brother, and he's got a close relationship with all of them. Sometimes he goes, "Where's Dad?" and "Tell Dad to come." And I just say, "Well, he's at work and he has to work and go home." I really don't know what his feelings are, but when he asks me a question I try and answer it the best I can.

I think all mothers at a couple of points in raising their children decide, "Oh, why did I have another child?" or "Why did I even have a child?" You know, why am I doing this? But then there's the points, well this is what I always look at when I get that feeling, "This is really wonderful, I'm raising a child." And, you know, the good overcomes the bad. I mean, there's just so much good to it.

Mary Beth

Mary Beth, who is 16 at the time of the interview, became pregnant at age 15. She and her two-month-old child live with Mary Beth's mother.

I first discovered I was pregnant when I was four months along. I was 15 years old. I kept telling everybody, "I'm going to get pregnant." So I thought I might be, but when I found out, I just couldn't believe it. I wasn't using any protection. I figured that if somebody's going to take the pill, they're the ones that fool around. And if you're not going to do it all the time, then why take them. I didn't see any reason, but I guess that's the time it happens.

I went to the local clinic, and the doctor really didn't say much of anything. Just told me I had

to tell my mom. And he gave me all the choices. Doesn't seem like there's very many. So I finally decided to keep the baby myself. I figured I took the responsibility of letting it happen, and I was going to accept the responsibility now.

I hid it from my mom the whole time I thought I might be pregnant. But when I finally found out for sure, and told her, she said, "Where did I go wrong?" The same thing they always say. And my dad doesn't live with me, but when I told him, he flipped out, too. Nobody wanted me to make the choice of keeping the baby. All my friends told me to give it up or I wouldn't be able to run around like I did. I was really scared and I cried a lot. And Rob—that's the father—didn't want to talk about it.

I had known Rob for about five or six months, off and on. I was serious about him, but he wasn't about me. When he first found out, he denied it. But he knew it was his. And then he called me every once in a while, to see how I was doing. And to give me a bunch of lies. He always said he'd be around, but he never came back. He kept in touch, and whenever he called, he acted concerned. But I figure that if he really was concerned, he would have done something about it, instead of just calling on the phone. It would have been easier if he had been there.

Once my family knew I was pregnant, they babied me. It drove me nuts. They seemed to care, but when my mom talked about it, she didn't, because she wanted me to give the baby up. Once I realized that I was actually going to have a baby, my biggest fear was that I wouldn't be able to raise him by myself. That aspect's still the biggest one. I still have it. And that I might not make a good mother, and things like that. And I figure, by the time he's old enough to know what a father is, I should be married. I hope.

Things are a lot different than before, especially at home. I've got more responsibilities than I did. My mom works, so that means I have the house, I have the baby, I have my little sister, and I have cooking to do. My mom helped out with the baby in the beginning, but now she won't even hold him. Maybe she'll hold him for five seconds, and then give him back. And she worries about things, and she cries a lot.

I feel I don't have as many friends as I used to, because I can't go out. Old friends talk to me, but just to be nosy. You lose a lot of friends. Either they're not wanting to hang around, 'cause you can't do anything, or else their mothers and fathers are saying not to. But a few stay close.

The only regret I have is that he looks just like the father. He looks just like him, and it drives me nuts. The father called me one time, and he said he wanted to see the baby. My mom told me he wasn't allowed to see him. But I told him that if he really wanted to, I'd find some way. But he never called again. He called once while I was in the hospital, but he wouldn't go to the hospital. He called the week after I got home, but it's been two months since I've heard from him. He doesn't write, so I figure he didn't care about that either.

My baby's ten weeks old now. He rolls over already, and I can't believe it, because it's just too early. He laughs a lot. He smiles every time you look at him. I've gotten him spoiled. He's only going to sleep if I'm laying down and he's laying on my chest. But then I can put him in his bed and he won't wake up. He's growing so fast, I just wish—the only thing I wish is that Rob would be around to see it.

Carla, and Linda and Ron

In these two tapes, three young people tell how they decided to work through the advent of unplanned pregnancies--Carla by choosing adoption, and Linda and Ron by choosing marriage.

Carla tells how she became pregnant, her family's reaction, her own difficult adjustment to the idea of being a mother, and finally how she made the decision to allow someone else to adopt her baby.

Linda and Ron decided to marry and they are facing the multiple responsibilities of marriage and child-rearing. This choice, too, is not an easy one because of the economic, social, and psychological realities of marriage that are particularly demanding on people who are young.

Participants may wish to hear the tape of Carla and discuss it before listening to the Linda and Ron tape. Questions to consider follow below. At the end, they may wish to consider the social attitudes that seem to support or discourage young people in making choices of adoption or marriage.

Carla: Questions to Consider

Reactions to the Pregnancy

What was Carla's reaction when she learned of the pregnancy? Why do you think she reacted that way?

What were Carla's parents' reactions to the news of her pregnancy? How do you think they must have felt when she told them of her decision to put the baby up for adoption?

Opting for Adoption

What were Carla's reasons for deciding on adoption? What were some of her first fears?

How do you think Carla will feel about the adoption in a year? in ten years? in 30 years?

The Meaning of Motherhood

Was it easy for Carla to be a caring mother while she was carrying the baby? Why or why not?

What does being a "good mother" mean to Carla? Why did she say, "I did what a mother should do?" Do you agree with her?

Linda and Ron: Questions to Consider

Telling Parents

What do you think of the way in which Linda and Ron told their parents that Linda was pregnant?

What do you think of their parents' reactions? Do you think Linda's view of her parents' feelings is accurate?

The Decision to Marry

Do you think Linda and Ron have a good basis for marriage? Why or why not?

How have they changed individually since the birth of the baby? How have they changed as a couple since the birth of the baby?

What are some possible outcomes of marriage at this age? What factors make it easier or more difficult for a couple who marry young to stay together?

Society's Sanction

Do you feel society today encourages a young couple who get pregnant to marry? Are there more or fewer social supports for them than for others who made different choices when faced with pregnancy?

Carla

Carla became pregnant at 16 and gave up her child for adoption. This interview was made six weeks later.

I got pregnant the first night we ever had any kind of sexual relationship. I didn't think I would. I was very naive, very ignorant towards a lot of things. I didn't think I would and I was playing it more on luck and found out the hard way. It was always a possibility, but I had turned it into an unrealistic one in my mind that it just wasn't going to happen.

I just built up a thing of, well, to make love to somebody, you don't use birth control, it just takes away from everything. You weren't making love to somebody, you were just screwing around for the night. It sounds crazy, I know, like when I think back now, I go, "God, that's dumb."

I went to get a pregnancy test. And when I found out, I just couldn't speak. The only thing that came into my mind is, "What's my mother going to say? What's my father going to say? Oh, no, what's my grandmother going to say? What am I going to do?" Nothing about myself or about Timmer, it's all about my parents and my grandmother. Then when I got home, I started thinking. I don't know how he's going to react, I wasn't sure in that situation. I was scared that he would just leave me or something. And I called him the next day. I didn't tell him. I called him up—he was going to be coming down that week and I told him to come down earlier. I had something to tell him. I didn't want to say it over the phone, I wanted him to be there and so he said he would. And he came down. When I told him, he was amazing. He was, and he didn't run away. He said, "Okay, now we're in this position and we'll have to deal with it." And he was so supportive. I was like, wow, you know, because I've heard all these evil stories from my friends about boyfriends leaving them and everybody running away from them when they find out they're pregnant.

I had it all set up how everybody was going to react. My mother was going to say, "Okay, okay, we'll take care of it. Don't worry." And my father was going to slam me across the room. When I got down there, I was sitting with my mother and she said to me, "Did you get your period yet?", 'cause she knew it was late, and I said no. I said, "Oh, I don't want to talk about it this time." And she goes, "You pregnant? ", like jokingly, and I go yeah. And she nearly hit the ceiling; she nearly hit the ceiling. She got very—she reacted the way I thought my father was going to. She didn't slam me around the room with her hands, but verbally she slammed me around the room. Then I went down and I just said to Dad, "I'm pregnant." He said, "Yeah, okay, now what are we going to do?", very calmly, very lovingly like.

I was very lucky. My parents and Timmer both said, "You have to carry it, you have to feel good with what you're doing. You have to make the final decision and we'll go along with whatever you say." I had some ideas in my mind that I wanted to do, but I didn't want to leave anything out, close any options to me without really thinking them through.

What my mind kept flipping from was whether to give it up for adoption or keep it, because the romantic side of having a baby and holding it in your arms and singing it to sleep and raising it the way, you know, giving the kid a good life and stuff and being a good parent. Oh, it was so romantic. And sometimes I just fell into that, but I usually stayed pretty consistent with my thoughts.

And the adoption seemed like the most sensible thing to do. I couldn't think of the responsibility of a child and taking care of it and having to feed it and clothe it, when I could barely clothe and feed myself at the time. And then the last week or two was just, it was about, it was past my due date already, and there was just a lot of tensions and stuff like that.

And also with Timmer who was the father of the baby. We were having a lot of troubles. He was having a hard time adjusting to this, this big belly and just the whole thing, the whole chemical thing about pregnancy. How I would get really

irritable sometimes for no reason, and it was just, it was just a very hard time, and we were talking about him leaving and not staying until the baby was born. And he finally left and I just started smoking. And I just—I can't explain what happened. I was just in a very bad uncaring frame of mind to myself and toward everything that was happening, and I started smoking again. It was like a week, a week or two before the baby was born.

I feel it's essential for a baby to have a father, to have two parents. I had thoughts about raising that baby alone and me physically abusing it, which is nothing in my nature, but physically abusing it because just the intense situation of taking care of a baby 24 hours a day, and it's not on any time schedule that you like. It's when it needs to be fed, and it needs to be changed, and I could just see really physically abusing that baby because I couldn't take it after a while. I'd also need a situation where I was financially well off, not well off, but you know? A situation where I'm in a place where I feel good, and I can give my, give the child a good education and just give it a lot of things. Because I think it's good to be, it's nice to be a good parent. It's good to be a good mother and stuff.

But I felt really good. I didn't have any second thoughts in the hospital. I was glad I had the time. I took care of the baby. I fed it, and I changed it, and held it and sang to it and stuff in the hospital. And I was just very happy. I really understood that I couldn't take care of it, and that somebody else could give it what I couldn't give it, and I was very happy. In fact, I had really felt the worst for myself. I thought, "You've got to prepare yourself for being very emotional, being very upset, especially from being drained from just having a baby, physically, emotionally drained, and it's going to be hard."

I had to take it out of the hospital and take if off grounds because women have sued hospitals, saying that they made them give the baby away, and while they're on hospital grounds they're liable for what happens there. And so that's why they made me take it in the car and drive it around front. And the people had to walk off the hospital cement onto the parking lot where they're not responsible and then take the baby.

We didn't get much time. It was very emotional, very tense time when they came. We could hardly say any words or express our feelings toward each other, so there wasn't much conversation. They were scared to come out. They were in the hospital the whole time. They were scared to come out to the car because they thought I'd be upset. I was scared to go in because I thought they'd be upset. When I gave the baby over to them, I was very emotional and me and my mother and father were there. And they all sat there and cried.

The only people who really stayed through with it were my parents, really to the end. Timmer stayed until almost the end, four days before the end. But my parents were really the only people who stuck with me and I was very lucky because I knew they would. But I didn't think they would to the extent that they did. They just really, whenever I needed some emotional support, they were there.

I feel a lot wiser from the experience. I feel more, more, I don't know a good word for it. I feel like I know what my mistakes were and I know what not to do the next time. And what went wrong and what exactly to do and stuff. I feel much more older.

Sometimes I think about the baby, but I never think of wanting it there with me other than it would be just nice to see it and talk to it, or some—it can't talk, but just spending time with it. But I never have any regretful feelings about giving it up for adoption. I feel very happy when I think about that, that I did that. I just feel—I hope in the future I won't get upset about it. I feel there's no reason to. That's the point. I did what a mother should do.

Linda and Ron

Linda is 17, Ron is 18. They were married when Linda learned she was pregnant at 16. Their child is one year old.

Ron

I was 17 when we got married.

Linda

I was 16 and about 16 weeks pregnant. I was a sophomore in high school and I was all set to drop out of school. I didn't want to finish very much. It was Ron and my mother who insisted that I finish school.

Ron

I think an education's really important. If there was any time after Sara was born she'd like to get a job and do something, it'd be harder to get a job if she didn't have a diploma. I graduated and I really would have liked to go to college, but my family probably wouldn't have been able to afford it anyway.

Linda

It was really kind of hard to tell my parents that I was pregnant. I didn't want to hurt them.

Ron

We decided we'd do it on this one night where Linda would come and have supper at my house. She came over and we went to go and tell my stepmother. First, we asked if we could talk to her and we took her into the other room and sat down and she said, "You're pregnant, aren't you?" I thought she was going to be mad but she was actually pretty happy about it. But the only thing was that she was a little disappointed that we didn't tell her earlier. And then we borrowed the car and went over to Linda's.

Linda

My parents were having this party and we tried to get their attention. We were following them all over the place just so we could get their attention for a minute. So finally I went downstairs and said, "Mom, Dad, we have to talk to you." They said, "Is it serious?" And I said, "Yeah, it's serious." And they said, "What is it?" And I said, "We both want to talk to you." So they said okay. And we went down and we were sitting there and instead of saying I was pregnant and we *had* to get married, we wanted to make it sound like we really wanted to get married. So I said, "We want to get married." And they said, "Oh, no, no, no, you're too young." And I said, "Mom, I'm pregnant." And she said, "No, you're not." And I said, "Yes, I am."

She didn't think I was because I had been telling her to buy tampons for me and I'd been hiding them and everything. Then we went upstairs where it was more private and we were talking. I thought my mom would have a nervous breakdown.

You see, I was the only girl in the family and I was really a pretty good student and I was just really kind of special to them. I was kind of the example to my two younger brothers. And so it was just really hard because they thought a lot of me and trusted me and all that. And I thought they were going to kick me out of the house and just have nothing to do with me.

They took a little while to get over it. But then they said, "We'll help you with your decision." and then they were just really super helpful. They were really good. They helped us find an apartment, and they helped us out with transportation and all, because we didn't have a car.

Ron

I guess my relationship with my parents isn't that great. I could talk to them but, well, my stepmother, she's interested in what we're going to do. But she really can't help out with the money. I didn't write my dad until after we were married. He wasn't really mad, he just said, "Well, that's nice to know."

Linda

Our hardest adjustment has been Ron getting laid off. The main problem was about money. That's it.

Ron

I'll find a job somewhere.

Linda

You see, we don't have any credit rating yet, and one of the hardest things is to get a credit rating when nobody will accept you.

Ron

Yeah, we wanted to see this apartment but when the landlord found out we were just out of high school, he just said no.

Linda

You know, it seems like all my old friends—my high school friends—they hardly ever come around. It seems like they're scared that if they get too close to you they'll get pregnant, or something like that. I guess they're just busy with their own life. They have completely different things to worry about than I do. I've got a husband, a baby, and a house and all that stuff. Somehow, I just feel older than them now.

Ron

There have been a lot of other changes. Before Sara was born, if we wanted to go see a movie, even at midnight, we could just get up and go and we didn't have to worry about anybody else or anything. But now with the baby, if you want to go to movies; well, there's just a lot of things.

Linda

We have to find somebody to babysit and I have to get her supper and her bottle ready, and just a whole lot of things. It's just not the two of us anymore.

Ron

I'm just kind of, I'm just the kind of person who likes to go and do a lot of stuff. But you just can't do that anymore. But we are doing more things now.

Linda

We didn't really have any information on being an effective parent. I took sex education but that doesn't teach you to become a parent; it just teaches you how to become pregnant. I knew about birth control and all that stuff. But I got pregnant anyway. I mean, the reason I wasn't using birth control was, well, I was kinda scared to. It would mean that I was a "bad girl" if I went and admitted that I was having sex with my boyfriend. And I just felt really guilty about that, so I just didn't use it.

Ron

I think we've both changed a lot. Linda's not the sweet little girl she used to be. I was just so used to her kind of being a little girl instead of a woman.

Linda

When we were just dating, I was all giggly and I acted really kind of weird and all that stuff. Now, I don't know. I guess I don't giggle as much as I used to. I just feel completely different and I'm kind of happy that things worked out the way they did.

Bruce, Anthony, and Robert

These three cases focus on the unwed father. At first it may seem that the male is somewhat removed from the trauma of an adolescent pregnancy. After all, in the last analysis it is the woman who has to carry and give birth to the child. But these accounts give some insights into the turmoil, complex feelings, and attitudes toward masculinity and fatherhood that can be experienced by young men.

Participants heard the Robert tape in Seminar One, but it is recommended that it be played again now for comparison with the accounts of Bruce and Anthony.

Robert, you will remember, has only recently learned that his girlfriend is pregnant—he is in the midst of coping with it. For Bruce, the whole experience seemed distant, like it wasn't happening to him; but he, too, is still coping with the meaning of it. Anthony's daughter was only nine weeks old at the time his interview took place, but he, in contrast to Robert and Bruce, sees himself as a father in very concrete terms.

These three accounts taken together can form the springboard for further discussion about the implications of an adolescent pregnancy for a young man. How could points from these case studies be useful in helping our sons think more deeply about the consequences of sexual behavior?

Bruce, Anthony, and Robert: Questions to Consider

Relation to the Girl

What are some similarities and differences in their relationships with their girls?

Do you think each one really loved and cared about the young woman at the time of conception? What about after the pregnancy was known? How do they show their caring or lack of it?

Fears

What do you think these young men fear most about the situations they find themselves in?

Who could best help them think about their responsibilities and rights in these situations?

Fatherhood

How does each feel about being a father?

Do you think young men think much about being fathers someday? Why or why not?

Guilt

Do you think all the young men feel guilty?

What factors contribute most to Bruce's feeling guilty?

What, if anything, might these young men do to assuage their guilt? How would you talk about this with an adolescent in a similar position?

Bruce

Bruce is 17. Last year he fathered a child, but has not kept in touch with the child's mother. There is no audio tape to accompany this transcript.

I just couldn't tell anyone. Not even my friends. I just couldn't say, "Annie's pregnant. I'm the father." I was pretty confused and very scared. I was afraid my parents would find out, but they haven't yet. I sure hope they don't.

At the time it happened, it didn't seem like much. We certainly hadn't planned on it. Her parents were away for the weekend and I just went over to her house. The exciting part was just being together for the night. Things, well, started happening, and you know....

I remember clearly the day we found out. I sat outside in the waiting room staring at the white walls, so nervous. I remember sweating. She didn't say anything; all she did was nod her head and look away. The whole walk home we didn't look at each other, and neither of us said anything. I didn't know what to say. She cried a lot after that. When we did talk, we talked about our different choices; whether or not to get married, put it up for adoption, or to find out about abortions. It seemed so unreal. I couldn't see getting married. My parents were sending me to college that fall. I wanted to get my education, and I just wasn't ready for all those changes that go along with being a father. I cared for her a lot but there were other things to consider. I mean, my future and all.

She must have told her parents because she left the city several weeks later. She called to tell me that when she got settled, she'd let me know her phone number and where to write. She hasn't called since. I guess her family wouldn't let her or she was too ashamed or scared. I probably should have tried calling her, but I didn't.

Everyone at school asked me what happened to her. All I said was she had family problems and had to get away. My parents asked me about why we weren't seeing each other anymore because we'd been going out for over a year.

I heard that she did have a child. A little boy. It really freaks me out to think about it. Me, a father. I guess I feel pretty guilty. I just felt afraid of the whole thing.

I think about them every now and then and wonder what he looks like and everything. But it's so far away, it's like it happened to someone else, like it's someone else's problem. Just doesn't seem real.

Anthony

Anthony is 19 years old, has a nine-week-old daughter, and did not choose to marry the child's mother. Although unmarried, he feels a deep responsibility for the child.

My girlfriend and I are about the same age, 'cause our birthdays are eight days apart. We're both 19 right now. We've been going together for four or five years. I was about 15 or 16 when we started. And I've never been involved with another woman since I've been going with her. It seems ironic to me that I didn't, too, because most people do. But I didn't. And I consider my relationship with her a loving and caring relationship.

When I found out she was pregnant, I was happy. She was happy, too. Like we both wanted it, and I told her that I would accept full responsibility and I would stay close to her, whenever she needed me, and all that. And that's just what I did. Like, when she went to the hospital, I was there. She didn't have no false labor pains or anything like that. When she went in, it was 3:00 in the morning. And her sister came and got me out of bed. I put on my clothes and I stayed with her in the hospital until she had the baby at 3:30 the next afternoon. And I stayed there all that while. Well, I stayed there until they...they had to put me out of the hospital.

We had a little girl and she's nine weeks old. We just had this baby, so I just got through dealing with this. We felt that if a girl and a boy feel like they can deal with it, that they have themselves

together, and are financially able to take care of a baby, and devote half of their time to the child—well, it would be all right. She could go and have the baby. And both the girl and the boy would be able to deal with it.

I've thought about marriage, but not until I get myself together. Not now. 'Cause it would seem dumb getting married right now. Like, we don't even have a house now. I live with my mother and brothers and sisters and she lives at her place. So, that's the way I feel, like you shouldn't get married unless you have something going for yourself, and it's a continuous thing. And you're able to deal with something.

My girlfriend's got another little girl—she's got another little girl by another boy. But I feel the responsibility for that child, too. Because it really is nothing to me. It's just a minor, minor technicality that he's the father. You see, she was going with this boy on a short-term basis. I'd say it was like a month. And she came up pregnant. He didn't want to accept full responsibility for the child. He went away to college. So me and her went back together, and I've been dealing with it ever since then. So, like, he comes back now and then. And I don't care if he wants to see his child, and that stuff. But as far as trying to come into my territory with my lady—that's out. And right now I feel she's committed to me. I'm confident about that.

Every day, I go off to work. I go home and I stay in the house, don't run around and hang out. And I go get her. I get my baby. I get both of them and I take them home with me. And I sit in my room and we look at TV together. This is about every day.

I think a father is very important in a child's life. When a kid gets big and they have somebody both really sticking with them like they're supposed to....And a child—children will come out real better. Like schoolwise; checking up with them in school, and like seeing how they're doing. And all that. And then, like, children will come out real good.

My father and me, we wasn't very close, and I used to take care of my brothers and sisters. I have four brothers and five sisters at home. And he wasn't very close to me. He would never give me advice on nothing. You know, how to do this and how to do that. And he didn't teach me anything. Like, he knows how to play a whole lot of musical instruments. And he could of shared that—taught me how to play all that. Maybe I could have used all that. But I couldn't ask him for nothing. I wouldn't even call him up today and ask him for nothing.

So I'm just going to go out there and do my own thing. And I feel that'll make him mad. You know, if I can get farther than what he done. I don't even care how he feels. I mean, I am...I'll be a man in a couple of years. And I wouldn't even care. It'll be just like not having a father. It's been that way for about, at least ever since him and my mother have been separated. It's been like that. That's been eight years.

But I'm going to be different with my children. I want both of them, my children, to have a happy life. To lead a life like a child's supposed to lead. You know, growing up and checking things out. And getting the right talks and things like that. Taking them out and showing them something. Exposing them to something. I figure they'd be well rounded with something like that by the time they get up in their teens.

And I see myself spending a lot of time in the home with them. When they get big, anything they need or want to ask, I want them to be able to come to me. 'Cause, like, that's what a mother and father is really for—somebody to come and ask questions. If the kids don't know something, or maybe there's something they heard, or anything, and want to know about.

And my responsibilities for them doesn't end until they're married, or gone to college, or something like that. That's when it ends. And even still, if they needed something, they could always come back to me or their mother and we would try and get it to them.

2.
A Closer Look at Adolescent Growth and Development

Some parents are anxious to explore in more depth the kinds of perspectives that they received in *Excerpts from the Experts* in Seminar Two. An additional seminar session might focus on discussion of those readings and others that you or the parents themselves might like to share. Realizing that the physical, social, and emotional growth of adolescents does have a certain regularity and that there are special developmental tasks for human beings at any given period can be quite reassuring to parents. For example, knowing that the development of a capacity for intimacy with someone outside the family is an important growth step for an adolescent helps us put in healthy perspective our son's two-hour talks on the phone or our daughter's preferring to stay home to see her boyfriend to going with the family to the movies.

Much has been written about adolescence and the excerpts included in this handbook or listed in the bibliography are only representative. If parents opt for an additional seminar on this topic, one or two local "experts"on adolescent development and behavior might be invited to sit in and answer specific questions. An adolescent psychologist could be especially helpful in talking with parents about the impact on them of watching their son or daughter reach sexual maturity. Many parents don't consciously think much about it, but there can be a deep sense of the passage of time with thoughts about their own changing roles and relationships to their soon-to-be adult children.

3. Official Statements Regarding Adolescents and Sexuality

Parents may indicate an interest in learning more about what leading religious denominations, youth-serving organizations, and other community groups have to say about adolescent sexuality and adult responsibilities to guide young people.

The following selection of statements is not intended to include all possible viewpoints on teenage sexuality; but perhaps readers will find some ideas that can assist them in forming or refining their own viewpoints.

Members of your group may wish to ask local clergymen or agency spokespeople for their position statements; they may also wish to add to this selection the views of other community members who work with young people and their parents.

We wish to thank the following representative organizations for allowing us to present their views:

Boy Scouts of America

The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Future Homemakers of America

Girls Clubs of America, Inc.

Girl Scouts of U.S.A.

Movement to Restore Decency, sponsored by the John Birch Society

National Council of Churches, Synagogue Council of America, and United States Catholic Conference

National Foundation/March of Dimes

National Right to Life Committee

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Young Men's Christian Association of U.S.A.

Young Women's Christian Association of U.S.A.

The Boy Scouts of America

SUBJECT: Dealing with the issue of venereal disease and human sexuality

REFERENCE: Content recommendation 6 and 7: Boy Scout Program

VIEWPOINT: The religious educator and religious groups with chartered units

Basic to the relationship that exists between the Boy Scouts of America and the churches, synagogues, and other religious organizations that make use of the Scouting program is the understanding that the Boy Scouts of America offers to the religious institutions (as it does to other institutions of society) the Scouting program to use in meeting the institution's (church's, synagogue's, etc.) needs in its work with youth and families.

Of special significance in the relationship between the religious institutions and the Boy Scouts of America is the 12th point in the Scout law: "A Scout is Reverent. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others." If the relationship between the church and Scouting is to succeed and remain strong, the literature produced by the Boy Scouts of America must demonstrate a respect for "the beliefs of others." This principle must be observed also in dealing with the issues of venereal disease and human sexuality.

Agreement among the various segments of the religious community has not been reached on some subjects related to human sexuality (notably, homosexuality). Divergent views exist regarding who has responsibility for providing sex education. Value systems on which sexual behavior is based are not uniform among religious groups, parents, or society in general. Educators are not in agreement as to the optimum time to present information on human sexuality, the extent of details to be presented, or the method to be used in presenting the material.

These are among the reasons that the Health Education task force for the Boy Scout program recommends that the following principles be observed in dealing with the subjects of venereal disease and human sexuality:

1. That the responsibility and privilege of imparting information regarding sexual behavior and related moral issues rests primarily with the home and the religious community (if any) with which the Scout is associated.

2. That factual information regarding sexual growth and maturity be presented without comment on related moral issues.

3. That facts on venereal disease be presented as information, much the same as information on causes, prevention, and cure of other infections is presented. Adult leaders should be advised to exercise wise discretion in deciding when, by whom, to whom, and under what circumstances such information should be presented. Leaders should be counseled to involve parents, a representative of the religious community, and a physician in that decision-

making process and/or presentation. The need to observe this principle may dictate omitting from the Scout Handbook any presentation related to venereal disease and including it only in the Scoutmaster's Handbook and in merit badge pamphlets.

4. That leaders be advised to answer questions regarding human sexuality and/or venereal disease which merely seek factual information, if they feel qualified to answer with confidence; but make no attempt to counsel a youth on personal sexual behavior or the morality of it, since such counsel would of necessity be based on the counselor's own value system and may not agree with that of the Scout's parents or religious adviser.

5. That boys with questions or concerns related to sexual behavior be advised to consult their parents, religious counselor, or physician.

6. That questions which may involve counseling on the moral issues related to sex be referred by the leader to the youth's parents or spiritual adviser (if any).

7. That adult leaders be urged to refer to appropriate members of the Council, District, or Troop Health Education Resource Team (referred to elsewhere, having representatives from the religious, medical, and education communities) questions and concerns related to human sexuality and venereal disease which seem to demand competencies beyond their own.

The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Excerpts from *Good News About Sex*, by Harry N. Hollis, Jr., Director of Family and Special Moral Concerns

What is sex? A tough word to define, that's what it is! No dictionary is really big enough to define sex, because sex is as big as life itself. Sex is more than having a beautiful body or a Tarzan physique. Sex is more than tingling with chills of excitement in a parked car. Sex is more than the physical act of intercourse. Sex, or a better word is "sexuality," is not just our genital organs. It is entwined in our total personality so that it affects all of our relationships from the time we were born. Sex is our maleness or femaleness which encompasses our whole being. It is in this wide sense that we will use the word "sex."

Sex is OK!

Some people try to make us feel guilty because we are sexual beings with sexual feelings. They are dangerous "anti-bodies" who would have us believe that our bodies are dirty and evil but the Bible will have none of that. It does not teach that we *have* souls and bodies but that we are souls and bodies. And when God made the first bodies, He said, "That's good!" So sex is good not bad (Genesis 1:31a, Matt. 19:45; Hebrews 13:4). It calls for celebration, not shame. (Read the Song of Solomon.) Instead of blaming the devil for sex, give God the credit for this blessing. Accept the biblical truth that sex is OK!

But a word of warning. Some people get carried away with this idea that sex is not a demon and act as if it is a deity, a god to be worshipped. This idea is pitched at us in all kinds of ways from *Playboy*-type magazines to television

commercials for alluring perfumes and tempting after-shave lotions. But against this view stands a very important Bible idea: sex is good, but it is not God (Exodus 20:3). It's a gift from God for the enrichment of our lives.

Is There a Hex on Sex?

True, sex is God's gift; but look at all the problems associated with it. Look at the temptations that come with sex. Look at the guilt and tension that sex sometimes brings. These problems, temptations and anxieties cause us to ask if there is a hex on sex. The Bible teaches that people cut themselves off from God. A person makes himself the center of the universe. And that self-centeredness often leads to problems in sexual behavior. But remember: it is not sex that is evil; it is the misuse of sex that causes problems. It is building our lives around our own wants instead of around God that leads to such sexual misuses as exploiting dates and mates, choosing to dwell in a dream world of romance and conquests instead of the world of real persons and violating God's command by having sexual intercourse outside of a marriage covenant. So what's the answer? That leads to some unique Christian insights.

Good News about Sex

With all the problems brought on by selfishness, is sex hopelessly fouled up? Definitely not! Sex can bring pleasure and fulfillment if it is rightly understood and rightly expressed. That's good news! The Christian message gives us help in making sex what God intended it to be. Let's look at it.

For one thing, we find in the life of Jesus a *pattern* to follow in our relationships to others. Jesus lived love. He always treated everyone he met as a person to be loved and not a thing to be manipulated or used. This is basic to every kind of relationship in life including sexual behavior. This means boys are to treat their dates as persons to be respected, not sexual toys to be played with and discarded. Girls are not to use their bodies as date bait. So there is good news! In the life of Jesus we have the pattern for right relationships.

Here are some Christian principles which can help us make decisions about sex:

1. *Always act with love toward others.* This is the principle of *love*. The kind of love we're talking about is the kind Jesus demonstrated by always having respect for other persons. Christian love is the kind that seeks what is best for a person, not just for one date but for all life.
2. *Remember your body is God's dwelling place.* The principle of *purity* is that our bodies should be kept sexually pure not because they're bad but because they're good. God dwells in them. Our sexual behavior should be based on the awareness that the body is God's temple (I Corinthians 6:19-20). The Bible teacher teaches that premarital intercourse is a violation of God's purpose (I Thessalonians 4:3), but this does not mean that anything short of actual intercourse is permissible. The principle of purity means that heavy petting is a violation of God's will for unmarried couples. Heavy petting serves its rightful purpose only as a prelude to intercourse.
3. *Be faithful to your mate even if the two of you have never met!* Here is the principle of *fidelity*. Anticipate the covenant relationship that you will have

with your future mate by being true to God's ideals now. Behave now with integrity and decency so that you won't cheapen the marriage covenant you expect to make someday.

Future Homemakers of America

Statement on teenage sexuality by the National Staff.

The National Staff at Future Homemakers of America believe firmly that responsible choice is the cornerstone of working with teens and sexuality.

Before choices are limited by pregnancy, teens must be made aware of all the issues and choices involved in sexuality and parenting. The connection between sexuality and parenting must be made more real and more understandable for them.

We see the key choices for consideration by teens to be:

- the choice of planning or chancing your future
- the choice of developing realistic attitudes toward parenting
- the choice of when and if to have a baby
- the choice of being informed about the risk of birth defects with early pregnancy.

Among the most important of those choices is the first, the choice of planning or chancing your future. The passive "letting it happen" attitude, particularly of teenage girls, must be altered. The desire and ability to control one's own destiny must be awakened and strengthened.

Sexuality should not be seen as a topic separate from life (i.e., "Now we will talk about sex"). It must be realized that sexuality is a part of life goals, companionship, parenting, marriage, self-concept, and a myriad of other issues. Future Homemakers of America therefore advocates the early and continuing integration of human sexuality into our educational system at all levels. With its emphasis on preparation for individual growth and family life, the home economics curriculum is an ideal place to incorporate that integration.

Girls Clubs of America, Inc.

Statement from Edith B. Phelps, National Executive Director

Girls Clubs of America believes that the broad issue of human sexuality is essential and basic to an organization whose focus is girls. We regard the question of adolescent sexuality and sex education as specific components of the larger issue. Sex education programs in Girls Clubs are designed to meet the needs of their respective communities. Approximately one half of the Clubs have programs which deal directly with sex education. Such programs are coordinated by Girls Club staff members who have received special training and by experts in the community. The girls are always involved in the planning and focus of programs.

However, in many communities, it is far more effective to approach questions of human sexuality through value clarification programs, informal rap sessions, and youth leadership. Programs in Family Relationships and Parenting have been very successful in several Girls Clubs. At the Girls Club of Albany, Georgia, a family planning nurse from the Department of Human Resources conducted a class with Girls Clubs members on the human growth process. At Manatee County Girls Club in Bradenton, Florida, boys and girls were part of a child care course. In Owensboro, Kentucky, the Junior Woman's Club had a workshop on child care for junior high school girls. The programs were followed by short sessions on family living and sex education by the local health nurses and educators.

One of the five outstanding programs in the country in 1976 dealt with pregnant teenagers. Since 1974, almost 100 teenage girls in the southeast San Diego area have been able to continue their high school education at the Girls Club in a special program. With the cooperation of the school system, teachers go to the club so that pregnant girls can continue their high school courses. More than 60 percent of the girls in the program have not only completed high school but have entered college programs. In an area known for its high delinquency rate and increased numbers of child neglect cases, the Girls Club program has received wide recognition for its effectiveness.

Girl Scouts of U.S.A.

Statement by the National Board, May 1967

WHEREAS, We interpret sex education to mean developing understanding of sex as an integral part of a girl's growth as it relates to personal values, emotional, and social maturity;

WHEREAS, We are in accord with the recommendation from the 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth that "The family as the basic unit of our society has primary responsibility for developing values, freedom, initiative, and self-discipline in children," and the further recommendation "That schools, religious institutions, youth-serving agencies, and all other community agencies cooperate to create a favorable atmosphere for understanding the dignity and sanctity of the role of sex in human relationships";

WHEREAS, The Girl Scouts, as an organization for informal education, supplements the home, the church, and the school in many aspects of a girl's life; be it therefore

RESOLVED, That Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. accept responsibility for a supplementary role in sex education for its girl members.

As announced in the National President's letter, August 1967, the National Board of Directors agreed that Girl Scouts of U.S.A. should accept responsibility for a supplementary role in sex education for its girl members.

An interpretation of the Board's statement follows:

We interpret sex education to mean developing understandings of sex as an integral part of a girl's growth as it relates to personal values and emotional and social maturity. We recognize that sex education is a segment of a girl's total preparation for living in a complex world. We also recognize that sex education should primarily be a function (province) of the home, the church, synagogue, or religious group, and the school. Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., in accepting responsibility for a supplementary role in sex education for its girl members, thus supplements the home, the church, the synagogue, or religious group, and the school in this area, just as it does in many other aspects of a girl's life.

Girl Scouting provides each girl an opportunity to develop a self-confident personality. Our aim is to help each girl become a happy, resourceful woman, considerate of others, aware of what it means to be a female, eager and able to establish wholesome relationships.

The Movement to Restore Decency, sponsored by the John Birch Society

This statement is excerpted from "The Principles and Purposes of The Movement to Restore Decency," Belmont, Mass., sponsored by the John Birch Society.

To emphasize the contemporary breakdown of morality and manners we do not need to bring forth statistics, or examples, or arguments. The condition daily grows more obvious and more extreme.

Intentionally dirty minds in dirty bodies have become commonplace on our campuses and in our cities....

We find this degradation manifested on every side in filthy language, in squalid dress, and in lewd behavior. Sexual promiscuity has become so widespread as to be almost taken for granted, and even sexual perversion is now sometimes condoned from the pulpit....

Such periods of licentiousness, blasphemy, obscenity, iconoclasm and general depravity have been recurrent throughout history....

But the present development is distinguished from similar phenomena in the past by two characteristics. First, so far as we can judge from historical records, it is already more comprehensive as to variety of the evil traits being manifested, and more extreme as to degree than any parallel we know about in other times. And second, this contemporary degeneration is not entirely the natural effect of normal causes. It is being artificially and deliberately promoted by powerful human forces for their own evil purposes.

Despite all ephemeral evidence to the contrary, we believe that certain fundamentals still hold true with regard to man's behavior, in any civilization which he seeks to make worthwhile....

But we too have heard about change and progress. The procession of the centuries, the rise and fall of national cultures, the growth of man's knowledge, the fabulously increased speed of human movement and communication, the vast accumulation of man's other controls over his physical environment, and the multiplication of the numbers of men into thousands of millions, have not escaped our attention. We are aware that all of these developments have altered and added many pressures and temptations in the daily life of *homo sapiens* since Moses showed his tablets to the people of Israel. But we also believe that man's conscience has been concurrently developing and keeping pace.

...But we look,eventually, for guidance with regard to our conduct under all circumstances, new and old, to man's conscience itself....

Let us concede that perhaps one half of the ultimate force and direction of any human conscience is due to environment and training rather than to inheritance. That is all the more reason why this half of the molding of the growing plant should not be left to the diabolic hands of those who seek to destroy it. Yet that is exactly what is happening in America today.

...It is certainly with inner qualms that teenagers embark on an orgy of sexual experiences, which not only ruin their lives, but the bodies and lives of any children they may some day have. But these things and others like them are taking place because the warnings of conscience, having no support from sources whence support should come, are being overwhelmed by the pressures and propaganda of organized evil.

It is our ambition in time to do battle with these forces of evil on every front. But our first concern is with our school-age children....

...*Too many parents of our preceding generation have simply been abandoning their responsibilities for the training and guidance of their children.* Some parents have been brought to such action by persuasion that the schools could do a better job. Some have been coerced by the pressures of educational associations, school boards, teachers and neighbors like themselves who have already swallowed the deceptive "professional" line. Some have given up in the face of rebelliousness of their own children, who have already been brainwashed by the pervasive forces of evil to which they were submitted at such an early age. And some parents have merely let their responsibilities go by default, because of the greater ease and comfort which such a vacuous course provided them.

It is our hope to reverse this childish intent of our misguided youngsters—and unfortunately of many of their elders as well—to descend to the level of lower animals. We feel that civilized morals and manners and customs and traditions and values are very much worthwhile...

National Council of Churches, Synagogue Council of America, and United States Catholic Conference

Excerpts from the "Interfaith Statement"

The sexual attitudes of children develop as part of their general social attitudes. Furthermore, respectful and considerate sexual attitudes help create healthy social attitudes. When the family and society view sex as loving and fulfilling, rather than prurient and exploitative, then both the social and sexual attitudes of children benefit. A healthful approach to sexual relations, willingness and ability to impart sexual information in a manner proportionate to the child's stage of development—these are among the elements which foster healthy sexual attitudes and behavior in the young. So, also, is resistance to social pressures which in some instances lead to premature sophistication or unhealthy attitudes in young people.

Responsibility for sex education belongs primarily to the child's parents or guardians. A home permeated by justice and love is the seedbed of sound sexual development among all family members. Both the attitudes and the activities of the parents—toward each other and toward each child as an individual—affect this development. Healthy attitudes toward sex begin in the child's earliest years; they can best develop in an atmosphere that fosters in him a deep sense of his own self-worth, bolstered by love and understanding.

We recognize that some parents desire supplementary assistance from church or synagogue and from other agencies. Each community of faith should provide resources, leadership, and opportunities as appropriate for its young people to learn about their development into manhood and womanhood, and for adults to grow in understanding of their roles as men and women in family and society in light of their religious heritage.

In addition to parents and the religious community, the school and other community agencies can have a vital role in sex education in two particular ways.

- They can integrate sound sexual information and attitudes with the total education which the child receives in social studies, civics, literature, history, home economics, and the biological and behavioral sciences.
- They can reach the large numbers of young people whose families have no religious identification but who need to understand their own sexuality and their role in society.

For those who would introduce sex education into the schools, however, the question of values and norms for sexual behavior is a problem—indeed, the most difficult problem. It is important that sex education not be reduced to the mere communication of information. Rather, this significant area of experience should be placed in a setting where rich human, personal and spiritual values can illuminate it and give it meaning. In such a setting, we are convinced it is not only possible but necessary to recognize certain basic moral principles, not as sectarian religious doctrine but as the moral heritage of Western civilization.

The challenge of resolving this problem of values in a pluralistic society makes it all the more imperative that communities planning to introduce sex education into the schools not only call upon educators to become involved in decisions about goals and techniques, but also invite parents and professionals in the community to take part in shaping such a curriculum.

The increased concern and interest in this vital area of human experience now manifested by parents, educators, and religious leaders are cause for gratitude. We urge all to take a more active role—each in his own area of responsibility and competence—in promoting sound leadership and programs in sex education. We believe it possible to help our sons and daughters achieve a richer, fuller understanding of their sexuality, so that their children will enter a world where men and women live and work together in understanding, cooperation and love.

National Foundation/March of Dimes

Excerpt from the pamphlet, "All About the March of Dimes."

What about teenage mothers?

Adolescent girls make up the highest risk category of motherhood. They have an extremely high incidence of prematurity, low-birthweight babies, and infant mortality. The March of Dimes works closely with leaders in the health, education, and social service professions to make young people aware of the hazards of adolescent pregnancy and the responsibilities of parenthood.

...In view of the high incidence of underweight babies among teens, March of Dimes youth programs stress the hazards in adolescent pregnancies.

National Right to Life Committee, Inc.

Statement from Judith Brown, Director of Public Relations

The teenager who becomes pregnant is usually aware that an unusual physical transformation is taking place within her body. Although she may have reservations about her condition, she must also be advised of the fact that her womb has now become the home of a new human being, genetically different from her, and in every way a distinct individual. She is now embarking on the most delicate mission of her young life—caring for herself and for the person alive within her.

The teenager has probably received some health education and is therefore aware of many of the basic facts relative to her new coexistence. But she will need additional assistance as well as social acceptance so that she can go through her entire pregnancy feeling at ease and as emotionally and physically comfortable as possible.

Pregnancy is a totally natural experience for the female body. From the moment of conception until the moment of birth, each and every day of the pregnancy brings refinement and growth to the new person within the womb.

Abortion is a totally *unnatural* experience for the female body. It is a surgical procedure which renders the death of the new human as an immediate consequence and the possibility of physical and emotional side-effects as future consequences for the mother.

There is no question that a natural experience is far better for the teenage body than the shock of surgery. And, as you approach the young person who is learning how his or her body works, it seems to us that it would be far easier to accentuate the positive facts of pregnancy and the responsibilities which pregnancy demands, rather than emphasizing the negative aspect of abortion which is, after all, a cop-out on life.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Statement adopted by the Membership, October 26, 1972

Our society has neglected to deal responsibly with the sexuality of its teenagers.

Accordingly, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America strongly endorses The Commission on Population Growth and the American Future's recommendation on services to minors by adopting the following policy statement:

Reality today is that services responsive to health and welfare needs, most critically in the area of sexuality and fertility, continue to be denied to minors on the basis of their age alone. We believe that this denial constitutes an infringement of their rights as individuals. We believe that all medical services should be rendered according to individual needs and ability to comprehend and cope with the type of care requested and indicated, and on this basis only. Services to minors should be provided on the basis of their need and request for such services and on their own consent alone.

Furthermore, the Federation affirms the belief that an important part of providing complete fertility control services to minors is the development of knowledge and understanding among minors of their sexuality.

Young Men's Christian Association of U.S.A.

Statement of John R. Fisher, Deputy Director, Urban Action and Program Division, National Council of YMCAs

With 11 million sexually active teenagers whose birth rates are rising while that of the total population is falling, and with the endemic spread of VD, including increasingly drug-resistant strains, the nation's concern and resources should be focused on the resulting tragedies of babies, for their too-young mothers, and the societal consequences. Too often, however, public concern seems to revolve around physical sex aspects of the teenage dilemma. Life is far too complex for such a "simplistic" approach.

For decades, the Young Men's Christian Association has been committed to the concept that each individual is a total human being, a unity of spirit, mind, and body, and to focus attention upon any one aspect without recognizing and dealing with the interrelatedness of all three is an invitation to failure in truly meeting human development needs.

A correlated reality lies in the facts of individual differences, varying rates of human development and learning, and a broad range in the individuals to be involved in activities, projects, and enterprises. Recognizing these variables, YMCAs offer many varieties of threshold entry points, as well as activities for persons of all ages, sexes, faiths, and conditions.

But to enhance the development of human (adolescent) sexuality, the YMCA has moved in a number of ways, all aimed at helping young people develop self-esteem, concern for and understanding of others, and bouyant, good health. Some examples are:

- Parent-child programs involving over one-half million fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters in integrative human experiences beginning at ages five and six.
- Sex education unit courses for parent and child, stressing human sexuality—a whole person.
- Family communication skills programs, coordinated by the National YMCA Family Communications Skills Program Center in Menlo Park, California.
- Programs helping children (and adults) understand and develop values and valuing concepts in everyday living, coordinated by the National YMCA Values Center in Chicago.
- Resident and day camping programs involving millions of youth annually in intensive learning relationships.
- The YMCA Basketball Association involves nearly 100,000 youth across the country in low-competitive play based upon values and valuing by players, coaches, and parents.
- Programs with delinquent and predelinquent youth helping them to regain a sense of worth and to experience success in relationships, coordinated by the National YMCA NYPUM center in Los Angeles and the Juvenile Justice Center in New York.
- A broad range of health and physical education programs for all ages.
- Counseling centers and emergency "hot lines" for troubled youth.
- Program publications such as The Circulator and special resources.

The fact that each YMCA conducts a variety of programs enables each young person to be exposed to and take advantage of more than a one-track approach, thus enhancing the spirit-mind-body concept of the totality of the human being in a broad context as well as in each program activity.

Young Women's Christian Association of U.S.A.

Statement from Helen Southard, Director, National Board Program Unit

We believe that education in a subject as vital as sexuality must be provided, but education is not all formal. Attitudes are caught as well as taught. Parents have a big stake in this. As more and more adults learn that information does not per se encourage sexual activity in young people, they will want them to have accurate information.

We have taken a position to encourage sound programs of sex education in schools, and we believe that services needed by young people should be available. Among the components we cite as necessary in teen sexuality programs are the involvement of young people and also parents in planning and in the understanding of and encouragement of diversity. There should be regard for racial, ethnic, geographic, and age differences, for example.

Testimony of Helen Parolla, Director of Public Policy, at the Health Subcommittee of the Secretary's Advisory Committee on the Rights and Responsibilities of Women's Hearing on Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancies. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, January, 1977.

What the YWCA is doing today in the field of human sexuality has grown out of long experience. The YWCA has been actively programming in the area of human sexuality since 1906, studying the issues, assessing the needs, pioneering in program development and production of materials, always with an overriding concern for and participation of women and girls of all races and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The YWCA on the basis of our experience strongly supports such components as these:

- strong emphasis on exploring and establishing worthy identities as human beings and as women.
- developing skills, remedial education where necessary, job and career awareness and planning.
- understanding the anatomy and functioning of the female body.
- providing knowledge of and access to services such as birth control and abortion.
- attempts to get parental support for participation in programs.
- strong role models from all races and economic levels to work with teen women.
- involvement of the young women in planning, leadership, decision making, and carrying out of the program.
- adult or peer leadership which is knowledgeable, comfortable, and able to be frank in discussions with teen women about human sexuality.
- understanding of and encouragement of diversity in values and influences among teen women.

4. Identifying Community Resources

Parents may wish to explore exactly what services and sources of information are available to young people in the local community. A seminar session could be arranged inviting selected community leaders, educators, and youth program directors to discuss how they assist young people who are or may be sexually active. You may also wish to invite people from some of the local chapters of the March of Dimes or the Planned Parenthood Federation, or professionals from area family planning, youth counseling services, or venereal disease treatment centers.

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